



Department of Corrections

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The Honorable Jacquelyn M. Baginski
House Committee on Innovation, Internet and Technology
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

February 11, 2025

Re: H5176 – An Act Relating to Education -- Student Computer Device Privacy

Dear Chairperson Baginski:

This evening the House Innovation, Internet and Technology Committee will consider House Bill #5176. The passage of this legislation would prohibit an educational institution or school district from accessing any audio or video recording, transmitting or recording function on a student's institutional or personal device or using location data for tracking a student's institutional device or personal device, or allow a third party to do so, except in limited circumstances. While the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC) respects the legislative intent of this bill, it may create inadvertent consequences in a correctional setting.

The bill defines “educational institution” or “school” as “any public institution that offers participants, students, or trainees an organized course of study or training that is academic, trade oriented or preparatory for gainful employment in a recognized occupation and shall include any person acting as an agent of the institution.” The Department offers and facilitates a variety of such opportunities to the incarcerated population at the Adult Correctional Institutions (ACI). General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) are offered by the Department to those who wish to begin or continue their educational journey. Similarly, the Department works with external partners to deliver trade-oriented programming. Such opportunities currently and may in the future include tablets and other electronic learning devices as described in this legislation.

Along with rehabilitation of those committed to the ACI, the Department must also prioritize the safety and security of its facilities and the general public. The use of the devices outlined in this legislation come with some risk of misuse, some of which may jeopardize the safety of those who live or work within our facilities without the ability to expeditiously review and monitor data relevant to security risks. For this reason, the RIDOC respectfully requests that an exception be considered for institutions which deliver such programming and opportunities in a correctional setting to ensure the safety of all.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. Salisbury Jr.", written over the printed name below.

Wayne T. Salisbury Jr.,
Director

cc: Honorable Members of the House Innovation, Internet & Technology Committee
The Honorable Representatives Speakman, Knight, Ajello, Donovan, Cortvriend, Potter, and Cotter
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House