



## TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR POLICING EQUITY IN SUPPORT OF HB-7099

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My name is Rashad James and I am the Policy Associate at the Center for Policing Equity (CPE), a research and action organization committed to using science to identify and reduce the causes of racial disparities in public safety. CPE has worked with dozens of law enforcement agencies nationwide to improve their data collection practices and leverage that data to make public safety systems more equitable and effective.

HB-7099 would reinstate and improve traffic stop and search data collection and analysis in Rhode Island which would promote transparency, accountability, and equity in policing.

Robust statewide data collection standards on traffic stops and searches help lawmakers, law enforcement, and communities pinpoint the core issues driving inequity and the effectiveness of police policies and practices. Without statewide standards, law enforcement agencies are left with the burden of determining their own protocols for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data which frequently leads to incomplete, unanalyzable, and non-transparent data.

Nationally, law enforcement officers conduct millions of vehicle stops each year, making traffic enforcement one of the most common interactions between community members and officers.<sup>1</sup> In Rhode Island, as highlighted by a 2021 study from the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, municipal and state police departments conducted over 243,000 traffic stops in 2019 alone.<sup>2</sup> It is essential to acknowledge that traffic stops are a significant source of racial disparities in policing, including in Rhode Island, where evidence suggests disparate treatment of minority drivers in comparison to their White counterparts.<sup>3</sup>

Fortunately, the ability to identify racial disparities can be a vital tool for law enforcement agencies in influencing decisions related to resource allocation and enforcement practices. For the community, this knowledge can help bolster calls for change to minimize the array of harms on Black and other impacted members of the public while fostering trust and legitimacy.<sup>4</sup> States with robust traffic stop data collection laws, such as Connecticut, California, Illinois, and North Carolina, are better equipped to understand and effectively address racial disparities in traffic

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<sup>1</sup> Emma Pierson et al. (2020). A Large Scale Analysis of Racial Disparities in Police Stops Across the United States. *Nature Human Behavior*, (4) 736. [doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0858-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0858-1)

<sup>2</sup> Ken Barone et al. (2021) Traffic Stop Data Analysis and Findings, 2019. *Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy*, 55. [www.dot.ri.gov/safety/docs/CCPRA/2019\\_Rhode\\_Island\\_Traffic\\_Stop\\_Study.pdf](http://www.dot.ri.gov/safety/docs/CCPRA/2019_Rhode_Island_Traffic_Stop_Study.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ken Barone et al. (2021) Traffic Stop Data Analysis and Findings, 2019. *Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy*, 42. [www.dot.ri.gov/safety/docs/CCPRA/2019\\_Rhode\\_Island\\_Traffic\\_Stop\\_Study.pdf](http://www.dot.ri.gov/safety/docs/CCPRA/2019_Rhode_Island_Traffic_Stop_Study.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> McDevitt, J., Iwama, J., Bailey-Laguerre, L. (2014). Rhode Island Traffic Stop Statistics Data Collection Study. *Institute on Race and Justice*. [www.dot.ri.gov/safety/docs/CCPRA/2013-2014\\_Rhode\\_Island\\_Traffic\\_Stop\\_Statistics\\_Data\\_Collection\\_Study.pdf](http://www.dot.ri.gov/safety/docs/CCPRA/2013-2014_Rhode_Island_Traffic_Stop_Statistics_Data_Collection_Study.pdf)



enforcement. For instance, several jurisdictions in Connecticut revised their practices after enactment of their traffic data collection law revealed racial disparities in stops, leading to reductions in racial disparities in stops, with no adverse impact to crime or traffic crashes.<sup>5</sup> Changes to address racial disparities in policing also result in more effective policing: In Newington, Connecticut, after data shed light on an inefficient tactic and the department made a policy change, the number of stops resulting in a DUI arrest increased 250%.<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, critical questions regarding the effectiveness of policing practices, assessment of agency policies, degree of racial disparities, and strategies to build community trust can only be answered if the right data are collected. HB-7099 would help ensure that the right data are collected, empowering law enforcement agencies, lawmakers, and community members to identify factors driving racial disparities and make evidence-based decisions regarding public safety.

We urge you to support HB-7099 and contribute to a more transparent, accountable, and equitable policing environment in Rhode Island.

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<sup>5</sup> Ross, M. B., Kalinowski, J. J., & Barone, K. (2020). Testing for disparities in traffic stops: Best practices from the Connecticut model. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 19(4), 1289–1303.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12528>

<sup>6</sup> Condon, T. (2022, January 31). After poor start, CT anti-racial profiling effort is making progress. *Hartford Courant*.

[www.courant.com/2022/01/31/after-a-poor-start-connecticuts-anti-racial-profiling-effort-is-making-progress/](http://www.courant.com/2022/01/31/after-a-poor-start-connecticuts-anti-racial-profiling-effort-is-making-progress/)