

## **House Judiciary**

### **House Bill 2024 - H7303**

#### **RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES -- THREATS AND EXTORTION**

##### **11-42-4 Threats to Public Officials**

I am writing this letter to express my wholehearted support for the ongoing efforts to enhance and prioritize school safety within our community. As the Coordinator of School Safety and Security for the Warwick Public Schools, and as a parent I understand the critical importance of creating an environment that ensures the well-being of our educators, and staff.

In recent years, the significance of school safety has become increasingly apparent, with unfortunate incidents highlighting the need for comprehensive measures to protect everyone within educational institutions. Your commitment to addressing these concerns and proactively implementing safety protocols and laws is commendable and essential for fostering a conducive learning environment.

A safe and secure school setting is fundamental to the academic and emotional development of our students. It enables them to focus on their studies and contributes to a positive school culture. I would like to encourage continued collaboration with local law enforcement, community organizations, and parents to ensure that our school remains at the forefront of safety standards.

As a retired Police Officer having spent over two decades in the industry, I have seen how laws have been better crafted to protect those professionals who dedicate their lives to their profession daily. For instance, a police officer swears to protect the public that he or she serves. If a police officer is a victim of an assault laws put in place to enhance penalties against those wrongdoers exist. If you are a healthcare professional those enhanced laws exist to protect and punish those who commit crimes against them while in the course of their duties. I strongly support enhancing penalties and crafting the laws necessary to better protect our educators.

It is no secret that in 2024 we have seen a change in our educational institutions. Trying to pinpoint what has caused this is extremely difficult to do. Educators and administrators work in an environment that has proven to show an uptick in violent, aggressive behavior. It only makes sense to make improvements to our laws when data shows this.

There is no time frame on when we may get closer to addressing violent behaviors in our schools. In the meantime, we as a state must pass those laws that show our educators and administrators that we care about their safety while in the course of their duties. As a retired police officer knowing that there were enhanced penalties that were specifically written to protect meant something to me and so many others. We owe the same to our dedicated professional educators the same.

In conclusion, I want to express my gratitude for your dedication to school safety and my unwavering support for the ongoing efforts to make the State of Rhode Island a safe place to work. I am confident that, with continued collaboration and commitment, we can create an environment where everyone feels safe and secure and knows that the state lawmakers support them fully.

Thank you for your time and dedication to the safety of our school community.

Respectfully submitted,

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