



RHODE ISLAND SUPREME COURT

Office of General Counsel

Licht Judicial Complex

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Providence, RI 02903

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March 12, 2024

Via Electronic Mail (HouseJudiciary@rilegislation.gov)

Chairman Robert E. Craven, Sr.
House Committee on the Judiciary
Rhode Island State House
House Lounge
Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill #7741: An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses – Fraud and False Dealing

Dear Chairman Craven:

I write on behalf of the Judiciary to express our support for House Bill #7741, scheduled to be heard and considered this evening before the House Judiciary Committee. The intent behind House Bill #7741 is to prevent individuals from filing false liens against property owned by Rhode Island judicial officers. The legislation also provides a mechanism for judicial officers to request injunctive relief and an expedited process to remove the lien.

In recent years, the Judiciary has had to engage the Department of Attorney General to remove fraudulent liens filed against judicial officers by disgruntled litigants who had appeared before them. (See *State of Rhode Island, et al. v. Jeter, et al.* PM-2020-007918). This tactic, defined as “paper terrorism” involves the use of bogus legal documents and filings, or the misuse of legitimate ones, to intimidate, harass, threaten, or retaliate against public officials and members of the judiciary. Liens are simple and inexpensive to file but difficult for the victims to remove. Even when the claims are obviously fake, the supposed debtors are forced to spend thousands of dollars in legal fees to clear the titles to their homes and to restore their credit ratings.

Judges and magistrates are at the epicenter of our justice system. Every day they make difficult decisions based upon an evaluation of the evidence and legal principles presented to them. If an individual disagrees with the decision of a judge or magistrate that individual has recourse through the appeals process. Unfortunately, some individuals choose to retaliate against the judicial officer by false liens to maliciously inflict real harm on members of the Judiciary. This bill would make such conduct a felony offense and allow a court upon conviction to issue an order declaring the lien to be null and void and further order the encumbrance sealed and removed from

applicable databases. The court may also enjoin the defendant from filing a future lien against the targeted judicial officer.

I ask that the House Judiciary Committee to please consider passage of this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to express the Judiciary's support for this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathleen Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathleen Kelly
General Counsel
Rhode Island Supreme Court