



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
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Peter F. Neronha
Attorney General

June 6, 2024

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
Chairman
House Committee on Judiciary
State House, House Lounge
Providence, RI 02903

Re: HB 7567A: Prosecution of Domestic Violence Protective Orders

Dear Chairman Craven and Members of the House of Representatives,

I write today regarding HB 7567A, sponsored by Representative Jacquelyn Baginski, legislation that requires prosecution of violations of a protective order be handled by an attorney, appointed by the prosecuting authority, who self-certifies that they have successfully completed a specialized domestic violence prosecution training course.

Domestic violence cases are extremely important to my Office because of the long-lasting physical and emotional harm they cause. I have been, and continue to be, committed to ensuring victim safety and offender accountability, and am supportive of efforts that further that mission. While I certainly appreciate the important purpose of this piece of legislation, my concern is that this Office does not have the resources to effectuate its provisions with our existing staff.

Under current law, initial restraining order violations are typically prosecuted by local city and town solicitors, depending on the jurisdiction of the violation. The language provided in this bill will require my Office to have an attorney present for all State Police misdemeanor arraignments, where the defendant is charged with a violation of a domestic protective order. For this reason, the Office would need an additional three (3) full-time employees – consisting of two additional prosecutors and one support staff – to cover RI State Police arraignments in cases involving allegations of violations of a domestic protective order.

Additionally, the legislation requires that attorneys prosecuting violations of these protective orders self-certify that they have successfully completed a specialized domestic violence prosecution training course, and updated training every four years thereafter. I generally support trauma-informed and specialized training of prosecutors when appropriate, but this provision would require that all of our prosecutors obtain training which is not clearly defined in statute and has not yet been established.

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr., Chairman
House Committee on Judiciary
June 6, 2024
Page Two

As always, my Office remains willing to work with the sponsors and advocates to improve the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence. I appreciate the Committee's consideration and am available for any questions the Committee may have.

Sincerely,



Peter F. Neronha
Attorney General