



RHODE ISLAND SUPREME COURT

Office of General Counsel

Licht Judicial Complex

250 Benefit Street

Providence, RI 02903

401-222-8714/401-222-8634 (Fax)

March 11, 2025

Via Electronic Mail (HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov)

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.

House Committee on the Judiciary

Rhode Island State House

House Lounge

Providence, RI 02903

Re: House #5892: An Act Relating to Courts and Civil Procedure - Courts - Court Administration

Dear Chairman Craven:

I write on behalf of the Rhode Island Judiciary, the Judiciary of the United States Federal District Court for the District of Rhode Island, and the Judiciary of the First Circuit Court of Appeals to express support for House Bill #5892. This bill is scheduled to be heard and considered this evening before the House Judiciary Committee. The purpose of this bill is protecting the personal information of judicial officers and family members who reside with judicial officers.

In recent years threats and violence against judicial officers has increased significantly. In 2019, the U.S. Marshalls reported 373 threats against America's 2,700 federal judges; by 2022, that number more than tripled to 1,362. In 2023, Judge Andrew Wilkinson was shot and killed in the driveway of his home by a litigant angry over the Judge's ruling in a divorce proceeding. In June 2020, Wisconsin retired Judge John Roemer was killed at his home by an individual he had sentenced in a criminal case. In July of 2020, Judge Esther Salas' son was killed, and her husband severely injured, in the doorway of their home by a disgruntled lawyer. Judge Salas was the intended target.

Members of the Rhode Island Judiciary have been served by pro se litigants at their homes and received threatening mail. A Rhode Island judge had pictures of his home posted on the internet, along with threats to kill him, by an individual who appeared before him in Mental Health Court. Members of the Rhode Island Judiciary are receiving an unprecedented number of disturbing, harassing, and threatening emails from disgruntled litigants. Violence against judges is on the rise on a national level, with statistics confirming acts of violence usually take place at a judge's home, not the courthouse.

This bill would provide a measure of protection for judicial officers on both the state and federal level. The Act would prohibit state and local agencies from publicly posting personal information without permission. It also allows judicial officers to file notice with data brokers, businesses, and other associations to remove their personal information from public availability.

On behalf of the state and federal judiciary, I thank the House Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to explain the purpose of this legislation and ask that this Committee consider passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Kathleen Kelly
General Counsel