

**Written Testimony in Support of H5922**

Date of Hearing: April 1st, 2025

Dear Chair Craven, First Vice Chair McEntee, Second Vice Chair Knight, and Honorable Members of the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Julian Cohen, and I am a junior at Brown University. I founded the Confession Accountability Team with the Brown Initiative for Policy to address the widespread use of coercive interrogation tactics, particularly against juveniles, and to advocate for legislative solutions to this issue.

My commitment to this work began in the summer of 2022 while interning with the California Innocence Project. There, I heard heartbreaking stories of numerous individuals who had been pressured into false confessions and wrongfully incarcerated for years as a result. I vividly remember one phone call I had with a mother who told me, “My son was tortured and is now in prison for a crime he didn’t commit.” Later that year, when California passed its [law](#) prohibiting deceptive interrogation practices against juveniles, I saw firsthand the power of legislative reform in addressing this injustice and helping ensure that these tragedies never happen again.

Since then, I have continued to study the prevalence and consequences of coercive interrogations across the country. This issue is not confined to a single jurisdiction—it spans from California to Massachusetts, from North Carolina to Rhode Island. And it is not just the result of a few bad actors; these tactics are systemic, ingrained in police training, and routinely used in interrogations.

The more I talk to my peers about this issue, the more I realize just how little people know about what police can and cannot say during an interrogation. Most do not realize that officers can lie about evidence or make false promises of leniency. The burden should not fall on us—and most certainly should not fall on children as young as 11 years old—to navigate these complexities and resist coercion. We need safeguards in place to protect everyone and prevent false confessions before they happen.

Rhode Island has an opportunity to take a stand against these harmful practices. I urge this committee to support the passage of House Bill 5922, protecting our children from coercive interrogation tactics and ensuring that our justice system upholds the fundamental principles of fairness and accuracy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Julian Cohen  
Brown Initiative for Policy  
Confession Accountability Team Co-Leader