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ACLU OF RI POSITION: OPPOSE

TESTIMONY ON 25-H 5951, AN ACT RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES – AUTOMATED SCHOOL ZONE-SPEED-ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2025 March 27, 2025

The ACLU of Rhode Island opposes this legislation, which would broaden the current statutory limitations on the implementation of speed cameras by allowing their use by municipalities not just near schools, but in any very broadly defined “safety zone.”

In 2016, when the law allowing speed cameras in school zones was initially enacted, we noted our concerns about the installation of widespread camera systems which could then provide tracking of any resident who drove by the cameras and create a “log” of the travel of Rhode Islanders. We further commented that these types of camera systems undermine a major goal of traffic law enforcement – to stop drivers engaged in potentially dangerous driving as it occurs. The receipt of a speeding ticket weeks after an infraction – and sent to the owner of the car, regardless of who was driving – misses the mark in protecting pedestrians.

By their nature, speed cameras do little to prevent individuals from speeding in a designated zone, flagging them only after they have sped through the zone. Instead of acting primarily as a safety measure, this technology makes speeding tickets first about making money and second about driver safety. Instead of being on the street where they belong, police officers are relegated to watching a screen, unable to determine if a speeding individual is also under the influence of alcohol, experiencing a medical emergency, or involved in any other situation requiring law enforcement intervention.

For all these reasons, the ACLU opposes this bill. Thank you for your consideration of our views.