

January 18, 2026

To: Senator Matthew L. LaMountain, Chair
& the Honorable Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

Re: S-2053

“You never want a serious crisis to go to waste. And what I mean by that is: there is an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before.” – Rahm Emanuel¹

I submit this written testimony in opposition to S-2053, which seeks to “mandate arming campus police at public higher educational institutions and would include campus police in the definition of ‘law enforcement officer’ for the purposes of the Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights.” My theses are threefold: **1).** arming campus police does not prevent or deter mass shootings, **2).** arming campus police *increases* the amount of fatalities, and **3).** arming campus police will disproportionately subject black and brown students to harassment and violence.

In the wake of the senseless violence on December 13, 2025 at Brown University, emotions are understandably heightened around public safety. My maternal family has had deep connections to the Fox Point neighborhood of Providence – just a stone’s throw away from Brown – for close to a century. As a child, the Brown campus was my stomping ground. To turn on the television and see the streets that I associated with safety and fun cordoned off by emergency personnel felt like a desecration of holy land. Just minutes after the shooting, I had family and friends in the area who went into lockdown. I received frantic messages warning me to steer clear of the area. I made frantic calls checking-in on loved ones whose whereabouts were unknown. The fear, the anger, and the sadness were and still are of seismic proportions. We cannot even begin to fathom the depths of grief experienced by those who loved the two students that lost their lives,² and the complex trauma inflicted on the 9 people who were injured.

When the tears dry and dust settles, leadership has a duty to base their reaction and plan forward on an empirical reality. The General Assembly should not be swept away in the emotional currents of the moment and suspend their critical thinking. At present, I suspect that is exactly what is happening. This bill to arm campus police at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) and Rhode Island College (RIC) was introduced 7 times over the years. At every turn, as recently as last year, it died in committee. The text of S-2053 itself is substantively similar to previous versions. There were no elections since this bill was last heard – meaning those who opposed it last year

would, in theory, oppose it again this year. However, there is an influx of support for arming campus police, with a reported 37 sponsors in the House at the time of this writing.³ It is safe to say that the sudden demand to arm campus police is a direct response to the tragedy at Brown University.

Just two weeks after the shooting, State Representative O'Brien is quoted in a press release saying: "the unthinkable has come to Rhode Island and this horrific incident at Brown should serve as a wake-up call to our public colleges who refuse to arm their campus police officers."⁴ The most important detail is conspicuously absent from the press release and most narratives about the tragedy: ***Brown University had armed campus police on staff, on the clock, and on site at the time of the shooting.*** And yet, the shooter was able to enter an unsecured building, murder and wound several people, and casually stroll away on foot in broad daylight without being seen, stopped, or shot at by campus police. What followed was a public relations nightmare for the University: they had no leads, no answers, and no meaningful surveillance footage. A team of paid, trained, and armed professionals was exposed as utterly useless. It took 5 whole days of authorities appealing to the masses for information, involving the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a \$50,000 reward, and a tip from a homeless man to solve the case.⁵ This tragedy cannot be a "wake up call" to other institutions because Brown's campus police were asleep at the wheel.

The tragedy at Brown is a shining example of why arming campus police is not a plausible approach to preventing mass shootings. A longitudinal study of 133 mass shootings at schools between 1980 and 2019 concluded that the presence of an armed guard on-scene was *not* associated with a significant reduction in injuries. An armed guard had no deterrent effect. More alarmingly, the rates of death were 2.83 times *higher* in schools where an armed guard was present.⁶ Put simply: injecting more guns into an environment *increases* the number of fatalities. We must remember the narrative principle known as Chekhov's Gun: you should only introduce elements to a story if you plan to use it later. As the famous playwright stated: "if in the first Act you have a pistol hung on the wall, then it should be fired in the following one. Otherwise, don't put it there".⁷ We know how this movie ends, despite hollow platitudes about police being there to 'protect and serve'.

We must also consider the typical psychological profile of mass shooters. Data collected between 1974 and 2000 revealed the following trends: revenge was a motive for attacks 61% of the time⁸, 71% of perpetrators reported feeling persecuted or bullied prior to the attack⁹, 59% demonstrated an interest in violent forms of media, and 98% experienced or perceived a major loss before the attack.¹⁰ Since the shooting at Columbine High School, much has changed but much more has remained the same: gun laws are still lax, mental health is still stigmatized, and violence saturates our everyday lives. For those

who are struggling to achieve a sense of recognition and status, social media produces a sensationalist culture where negativity gives 'content creators' their '15 minutes of fame'. 78% of mass shooters have a history of attempting or considering suicide,¹¹ and many of them reach a breaking point where they want to die but are seeking martyrdom. The presence of armed guards may be what attracts shooters to those environments to begin with; as there is often a desire to commit suicide by cop.¹² Arming campus police at CCRI and RIC can make those institutions more enticing for would-be mass shooters, with the consequence of more deaths.

Arming campus police would cost RIC at least \$200,000 to implement. This money would be better spent on investments in mental health counseling services for students – since we know that shooters typically have or had ties to the schools they attack. The General Assembly must choose the preventative approach of allocating more money for mental health resources, over the reactionary approach of arming campus police.

A comprehensive discussion of campus policing requires an analysis of their roots in white supremacy and anti-blackness. As a formal institution, northern universities created campus police to help protect their material and symbolic interests during the Great Migration (1910-1970).¹³ When black people moved in droves out of the agricultural Jim Crow South to the manufacturing-based economies of the North, apprehensions grew about maintaining the racial color-line.¹⁴ The narrative at the time was that black people were 'encroaching' on campus neighborhoods and 'ghettoizing' them, thus making those universities less appealing to white applicants.¹⁵ University administrators fabricated stories of black crime and delinquency to justify support for dedicated campus police departments.¹⁶ This was only more solidified as campuses became hotspots during the Black Power and Anti-War movements.

The racist history of campus policing is concerning because the student bodies of CCRI and RIC are becoming more racially diverse. At CCRI, with 4 campuses throughout the state, approximately 44% of the students identify as non-white.¹⁷ At RIC, the total non-white population is almost equal to that of the white population – with Hispanic/Latinx accounting for 31% of the student body.¹⁸ Youth are always more politically radical and left leaning than their elders, making the college campus a stage from which to speak truth to power. Consider the ways Critical Race Theory was demonized; and how the Trump Administration cracked down on pro-Palestine encampments on college campuses.¹⁹ During these politically charged times, campus police will undoubtedly be utilized to suppress dissent among black and brown students. Arming campus police increases the likelihood that students of color will be harassed and harmed by officers.

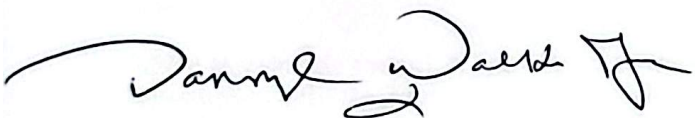
Campus police departments are not significantly different than federal, state, or local law enforcement. At the federal level, black and brown people are targeted. At the state

level, black and brown people are targeted. At the city level, black and brown people are targeted. There is only a difference in the scope and scale of authority. The squad cars and uniforms vary, but all forms of American law enforcement share the same function: patrolling and controlling black and brown people. The State Police report recommends that campus officers be armed following the scare at CCRI last year.²⁰ This should come as no surprise, though. After all, when was the last time we saw a law enforcement agency in the United States advocate *against* another law enforcement agency in the United States being armed? Never! American law enforcement agencies are obsessed with guns and insist on slowly but surely militarizing every permutation. If S-2053 is passed, it is only a matter of time before we start seeing campus police rolling around in tanks.

S-2053 seeks to mandate that public colleges and universities be armed, regardless of the stance that leadership at those institutions take on the matter. Students and staff – who this law allegedly seeks to protect – are not solicited for their opinions. No surveys were conducted to learn how the impacted populations felt before the bill was presented. This is purposeful maneuvering, because data shows that black and brown people have the least favorable views of the police.²¹ What happened to the political maxim of *governing by consent*? I have degrees from *both* CCRI and RIC. As a politically conscious and active black student, I was glad that campus police were not armed – otherwise I would have feared for my life for merely existing in those spaces.

I urge you to oppose S-2053.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darryl Walker, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Darryl Walker, Jr.

End Notes

¹ Rahm Emanuel. Video available here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=VJejsolfMkxIDxQp&embeds_referring_ouri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com%2F&embeds_referring_origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com&source_ve_path=MTM5MTE3LDI4NjYoLDE2NDUwNg&v=kvSP-HDcYog&feature=youtu.be

² I want to offer special prayers of comfort for the families and friends of Ella Cook, Mukhammad Aziz Umurzokov, Nuno Loureiro, and the unnamed victims who sustained injuries during this shooting spree.

³ Alexandra Leslie (2025). "After Brown shooting, lawmaker renews push to arm campus police". Article available here: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/after-brown-shooting-lawmaker-renews-push-to-arm-campus-police/ar-AA1Uj5u6>

⁴ State of Rhode Island General Assembly Press Release (December 30, 2025). Available here: https://www.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease/_layouts/RIL.PressRelease.ListStructure/Forms/DisplayForm.aspx?List=c8baae31-3c10-431c-8dcd-9dbbe21ce3e9&ID=376006&Web=2bab1515-odcc-4176-a2f8-8d4beebdf488

⁵ Gino DeAngelis (2025). "Man who identified Brown shooter to receive nonprofit award". Article available here: <https://www.abc6.com/man-who-identified-brown-shooter-to-receive-nonprofit-award/>

⁶ Peterson, Densley & Erickson (2021). "Presence of Armed School Officials and Fatal and Nonfatal Gunshot Injuries During Mass School Shootings, United States, 1980-2019". Article available here: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2776515>

⁷ Summary available here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chekhov%27s_gun

⁸ Bryan Vossekuil et al (2004). "The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative." Article available here: <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/admins/lead/safety/preventingattacksreport.pdf>

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Mikki Morrisette (2025). "Understanding the Roots of Mass Violence: Mary Moriarty in Conversation with Dr. James Densley". Article available here: <https://www.womenspress.com/understanding-the-roots-of-mass-violence-mary-moriarty-in-conversation-with-dr-james-densley/>

¹³ Eddie Cole (2021). "The racist roots of campus policing". Article available here: <https://archive.is/20210607142017/https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/06/02/racist-roots-campus-policing/>

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Data available here: <https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/community-college-of-rhode-island/student-life/diversity/>

¹⁸ RIC data available here: <https://www.ric.edu/documents/fall-census-enrollment-report>

¹⁹ Trevor Hughes (2025). "*Trump targeted college students. Campuses went silent*". Article available here: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2025/04/10/campus-palestine-protests-free-speech-trump-crackdown/83010185007/>

²⁰ State of Rhode Island General Assembly Press Release (December 30, 2025). Available here: https://www.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease/_layouts/RIL.PressRelease.ListStructure/Forms/DisplayForm.aspx?List=c8baae31-3c10-431c-8dcd-9dbbe21cc3e9&ID=376006&Web=2bab1515-0dce-4176-a2f8-8d4beebdf488

²¹ Brown & Lloyd (2023). "*Black Americans Less Confident, Satisfied With Local Police*". Article available here: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/511064/black-americans-less-confident-satisfied-local-police.aspx>