



April 2, 2026

The Honorable Matthew LaMountain
Chair, Senate Committee on Judiciary
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Subject: SB 2053 An Act Relating to Education -- Maintenance of Order on Campus

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

We submit this written testimony on behalf of the Rhode Island Council on Postsecondary Education in response to Senate Bill No. 2053, which would mandate that campus police officers at public higher educational institutions be armed and included under the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights.

The Office of Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC), together with the presidents of Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) and Rhode Island College (RIC), shares the Legislature's deep commitment to the safety and well-being of every student, faculty member, and staff employee on our campuses. Campus safety is not a peripheral concern — it is central to our mission. The Council and our institutional leaders think about it continuously, plan for it proactively, and take it seriously every single day.

On behalf of the Council, OPC is coordinating a comprehensive review of campus safety across multiple locations of CCRI, RIC, and the higher education and workforce centers. This review is intended to evaluate existing policies, identify areas for improvement, and ensure alignment with national standards and emerging best practices. This review includes evaluating the continuum of force, including arming of its campus police, used at both institutions. The Council identified this as a need in August 2025, issuing the RFP to identify a vendor in September 2025 and have made a tentative award to a vendor. This work reflects a proactive and coordinated approach to strengthening campus safety in a way that is responsive to the unique needs of each institution and the system. We look forward to keeping this committee informed of this work as it progresses.

Equally important, we are committed to engaging our campus community—including students, faculty, and staff—to foster open dialogue and incorporate diverse perspectives; a critical part of the comprehensive approach that will begin this Spring.

We must respectfully but firmly raise concerns about the approach taken in S. 2053. The bill, as written, would mandate a single, uniform outcome — arming campus police — across all public institutions, regardless of the unique characteristics, student populations, campus layouts, and security assessments of each college. This one-size-fits-all mandate would remove the Council of the existing authority it holds to evaluate what is appropriate and effective for each institution individually, and to act on expert findings and evidence-based best practices. The ability to make



tailored, informed decisions on behalf of each campus is not a gap in the law — it is a deliberate and important feature of how The Council is structured to govern. S. 2053 would undermine that flexibility at the very moment the Council is actively exercising it.

There are additional challenges with the language as written, specifically, timeline for implementation, need for funds, and concerns with the police bill of rights that are attached to this bill. The institutions will need enough time to thoughtfully implement this bill. This includes providing appropriate training, including psychological evaluations which have specific timing, certification, updating protocols, and storage of weapons/ammunition. For example, the above could require negotiation with the union, reclassification of positions, and potential additional pay for the officers.

We appreciate the legislature's interest and partnership on higher education and remain committed to working collaboratively with the sponsors of this legislation, along with state leaders, public safety experts, and our campus communities, to ensure that any decisions are guided by best practices, and a shared commitment to safety. We welcome continued dialogue on this important issue and look forward to engaging constructively as this conversation evolves.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

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Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner

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CC: The Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary
Mr. Steven Hayes, Esq. Chief Legal Counsel to the President of the Senate