

TOWN OF HOPKINTON, RI
RESOLUTION OPPOSING SENATE BILL 0909 AND HOUSE BILL 6273
RELATING TO THE ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS ACT (APRA)

WHEREAS, the Access to Public Records Act (APRA) was enacted to promote transparency in government while balancing the need to protect personal privacy and maintain efficient public operations; and

WHEREAS, compliance with the existing APRA requirements is already burdensome and expensive, particularly for small towns and other public bodies with limited resources and strained budgets; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 0909 and House Bill 6273 propose sweeping amendments to the APRA that increase the burdens and costs on public bodies, reduce protections for personal privacy, and do not meaningfully further the goal of government transparency; these changes include but are not limited to:

- Expanding disclosure of police reports not resulting in arrests;
- Requiring the release of final internal affairs reports;
- Mandating body-worn camera footage to be released within thirty (30) days;
- Removing protections for communications between elected officials and their constituents;
- Expanding the arrest record reporting window from five (5) to thirty (30) days;
- Releasing 911 call audio and related electronic transmissions;
- Reducing allowable copy fees and capping hourly retrieval and redaction costs;
- Proposing a procedure for dealing with “vexatious requests” that will not be helpful or effective; and
- Imposing increased civil fines on public officials; and

WHEREAS, the proposed language would increase the already substantial burden on small towns and public bodies with limited resources, undermine important personal privacy interests, chill communication between elected officials and their constituents, and disrupt essential public safety operations while providing little to no benefit in terms of increased government transparency; and

WHEREAS, cities and towns often respond to highly sensitive incidents, including those involving mental health crises, overdoses, domestic disputes, and juveniles, in which no arrest is made, and the mandatory release of reports or footage in these cases would risk exposing traumatic and private information while providing no benefits in terms of promoting government transparency; and

WHEREAS, the financial and operational impact of implementing these provisions, including broader search and redaction requirements, reduced cost recovery, and a mandated 30-day disclosure window for sensitive police body-worn camera footage, could strain already limited municipal resources and personnel, and would be unfair to taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, most small towns and public bodies with limited resources do not have the technical expertise or capacity to timely and cost-effectively review and redact video and audio content; and

WHEREAS, the wholesale release of internal communications, internal affairs reports, 911 records, police reports that do not result in arrest, and communications between elected officials and their constituents will have a chilling effect on community engagement, deter emergency reporting, disrupt public safety operations, reduce the effectiveness of internal affairs investigations, and erode the trust between residents and local elected officials; and

WHEREAS, increasing fines that can be assessed against public bodies with limited resources is unnecessarily punitive, unfair to taxpayers, and is not an effective way to encourage compliance; and

WHEREAS, the vexatious misuse of the APRA is, unfortunately, a common occurrence, and such conduct is unfair to public bodies and the taxpayers who support them, but the proposed language of § 38-2-17 is not helpful because its language is vague and imposes heavy-handed punitive measures against public bodies that file unsuccessful petitions; this will deter public bodies from defending themselves against vexatious conduct and will embolden those who would use the APRA in a vexatious manner; and

WHEREAS, the proposed amendments are essentially an unfunded State mandate that will increase burdens and costs on small towns and public bodies with limited resources; and

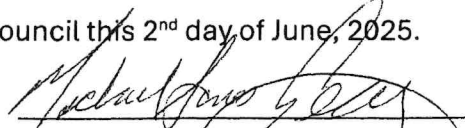
WHEREAS, any amendments to the APRA should be considered carefully and in collaboration with the local governments, local officials, and public bodies that are most impacted by them.

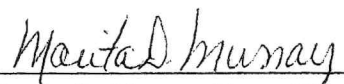
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Hopkinton Town Council hereby **opposes Senate Bill 0909 and House Bill 6273** and would ask the Legislature to reject these amendments in their entirety.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor of the State of Rhode Island, the Rhode Island General Assembly and the City and Town Councils.

The **RESOLUTION** shall take effect upon passage.

Passed as a resolution of the Hopkinton Town Council this 2nd day of June, 2025.


Michael James Geary, President
Hopkinton Town Council

ATTEST: 
Marita D. Murray, Town Clerk

