

2026 -- H 7580

LC003895

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC RECORDS -- ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS

Introduced By: Representatives Casey, Solomon, Phillips, J. Brien, and Hull

Date Introduced: February 06, 2026

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 38-2-3 of the General Laws in Chapter 38-2 entitled "Access to Public Records" is hereby amended to read as follows:

**38-2-3. Right to inspect and copy records — Duty to maintain minutes of meetings — Procedures for access.**

(a) Except as provided in § 38-2-2(4), all records maintained or kept on file by any public body, whether or not those records are required by any law or by any rule or regulation, shall be public records and every person or entity shall have the right to inspect and/or copy those records at such reasonable time as may be determined by the custodian thereof.

(b) Any reasonably segregable portion of a public record excluded by § 38-2-2(4) shall be available for public inspection after the deletion of the information which is the basis of the exclusion. If an entire document or record is deemed non-public, the public body shall state in writing that no portion of the document or record contains reasonable segregable information that is releasable.

(c) Each public body shall make, keep, and maintain written or recorded minutes of all meetings.

(d) Each public body shall establish written procedures regarding access to public records but shall not require written requests for public information available pursuant to § 42-35-2 or for other documents prepared for or readily available to the public.

These procedures must include, but need not be limited to, the identification of a designated

1 public records officer or unit, how to make a public records request, and where a public record  
2 request should be made, and a copy of these procedures shall be posted on the public body's website  
3 if such a website is maintained and be made otherwise readily available to the public. The  
4 unavailability of a designated public records officer shall not be deemed good cause for failure to  
5 timely comply with a request to inspect and/or copy public records pursuant to subsection (e). A  
6 written request for public records need not be made on a form established by a public body if the  
7 request is otherwise readily identifiable as a request for public records.

8 (e) A public body receiving a request shall permit the inspection or copying within ten (10)  
9 business days after receiving a request. If the inspection or copying is not permitted within ten (10)  
10 business days, the public body shall forthwith explain in writing the need for additional time to  
11 comply with the request. Any such explanation must be particularized to the specific request made.  
12 In such cases the public body may have up to an additional twenty (20) business days to comply  
13 with the request if it can demonstrate that the voluminous nature of the request, the number of  
14 requests for records pending, or the difficulty in searching for and retrieving or copying the  
15 requested records, is such that additional time is necessary to avoid imposing an undue burden on  
16 the public body.

17 (f) If a public record is in active use or in storage and, therefore, not available at the time a  
18 person or entity requests access, the custodian shall so inform the person or entity and make an  
19 appointment for the person or entity to examine such records as expeditiously as they may be made  
20 available.

21 (g) Any person or entity requesting copies of public records may elect to obtain them in  
22 any and all media in which the public agency is capable of providing them. Any public body which  
23 maintains its records in a computer storage system shall provide any data properly identified in a  
24 printout or other reasonable format, as requested. [Notwithstanding the provisions of § 38-2-4,](#)  
25 [electronically stored public records in a computer storage system, shall upon request be provided](#)  
26 [at no charge.](#)

27 (h) Nothing in this section shall be construed as requiring a public body to reorganize,  
28 consolidate, or compile data not maintained by the public body in the form requested at the time  
29 the request to inspect the public records was made except to the extent that such records are in an  
30 electronic format and the public body would not be unduly burdened in providing such data.

31 (i) Nothing in this section is intended to affect the public record status of information  
32 merely because it is stored in a computer.

33 (j) No public records shall be withheld based on the purpose for which the records are  
34 sought, nor shall a public body require, as a condition of fulfilling a public records request, that a

1 person or entity provide a reason for the request or provide personally identifiable information  
2 about him/herself.

3 (k) At the election of the person or entity requesting the public records, the public body  
4 shall provide copies of the public records electronically, by facsimile, or by mail in accordance  
5 with the requesting person or entity's choice, unless complying with that preference would be  
6 unduly burdensome due to the volume of records requested or the costs that would be incurred. The  
7 person requesting delivery shall be responsible for the actual cost of delivery, if any.

8 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
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- 1           This act would allow that public records stored in a computer system, upon request, be  
2   provided at no charge.  
3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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