

2026 -- S 2608

=====
LC004842
=====

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

—————
A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE RHODE ISLAND
COMMUNITY PROTECTION ACT.

Introduced By: Senators Kallman, DiPalma, McKenney, Mack, Acosta, Euer, Bissaillon,
Urso, Zurier, Murray, and DiMario

Date Introduced: February 13, 2026

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Findings.

2 The Legislature finds and declares:

3 (1) That the routine use of facial coverings by law enforcement officers has significant
4 implications for public perception, officer-community interactions, and accountability.

5 (2) Whether intended or not, members of the public may experience fear or intimidation
6 when approached by officers whose faces are obscured. This perception can heighten defensive
7 behaviors and unnecessarily escalate situations.

8 (3) Facial coverings limit the visibility of facial expressions, which are essential
9 components of nonverbal communication. In high-stress or emotionally charged interactions, the
10 inability to read an officer's expression may lead to misinterpretation of tone or intent, increasing
11 the risk of conflict escalation.

12 (4) The visibility of an officer's face is vital for promoting transparency, facilitating
13 communication, and building trust between law enforcement agencies and the communities they
14 serve.

15 (5) When officers are not readily identifiable, it increases the risk of impersonation by
16 unauthorized individuals, which further undermines public trust, endangers public safety, and
17 hinders legitimate law enforcement operations.

18 (6) The use of facial coverings by law enforcement should not obscure officer identity or

1 hinder accountability, nor should those coverings be used in a manner that enables or conceals
2 discriminatory or unlawful conduct.

3 SECTION 2. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "STATE AFFAIRS AND
4 GOVERNMENT" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

5 CHAPTER 28.11

6 THE RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY PROTECTION ACT

7 **42-28.11-1. Definitions.**

8 (1) "Law enforcement officer" means any of the following:

9 (i) Any person described under § 42-28.6-1;

10 (ii) Any person employed by a law enforcement agency of another state; and

11 (iii) Any person employed by a federal law enforcement agency.

12 **42-28.11-2. Masks and disguises prohibited.**

13 (a) Law enforcement officers under this chapter shall not wear any mask or personal
14 disguise while interacting with the public in the performance of their official duties unless an
15 exemption under subsection (b) of this section applies.

16 (b) The following exemptions to subsection (a) of this section shall apply:

17 (1) Law enforcement officers engaging in an undercover assignment in the regular
18 performance of their duties;

19 (2) Wearing masks that are surgical or N95 respirators designed and as needed to prevent
20 the transmission of airborne diseases;

21 (3) Wearing masks designed and as needed to protect against exposure to smoke during a
22 fire involved situation;

23 (4) Wearing masks necessary to perform duties during a water rescue operation;

24 (5) Wearing masks related to protection against exposure to biological or chemical agents
25 during an incident where such agents may be present;

26 (6) Wearing masks designed and as needed to protect against exposure to cold during a
27 declared weather emergency;

28 (7) Special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team officers utilizing gear necessary to protect
29 their faces from physical harm while they perform their SWAT responsibilities; or

30 (8) Law enforcement officers engaged in high-risk situations including, but not limited to,
31 a shootout, standoff, hostage-taking situation, or terrorist situation, where a mask provides physical
32 protection to the face.

33 **42-28.11-3. Criminal liability.**

34 A violation of this section shall constitute a misdemeanor and violators, upon conviction,

1 shall be imprisoned not exceeding one year or be fined not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000).

2 **42-28.11-4. Civil liability.**

3 Notwithstanding any other general or public law to the contrary, any person who is found
4 to have committed an assault, battery, false imprisonment, false arrest, abuse of process, or
5 malicious prosecution, while wearing a mask or disguise in a knowing and willful violation of this
6 section shall not be entitled to assert any privilege or immunity for their tortious conduct against a
7 claim of civil liability, and shall be liable to that individual for the greater of actual damages or
8 statutory damages of not less than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), whichever is greater.

9 **42-28.11-5. Severability.**

10 The provisions of this chapter are severable. If any provision of this chapter or its
11 application is held invalid, that invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications that can
12 be given effect without the invalid provision or application.

13 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

=====
LC004842
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE RHODE ISLAND
COMMUNITY PROTECTION ACT.

- 1 This act would prohibit law enforcement officers from wearing masks without an exception
- 2 granted by this act and would impose criminal and civil liability for violations.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

=====
LC004842
=====