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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

SENATE RESOLUTION

COMMENDING THE VALIANT INTERVENTION EFFORTS OF SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE JOSEPH J. MCBURNEY AND HEAD OF SECURITY, DANA SMITH ON BEHALF OF HIS COURT INTERN WHO WAS WRONGFULLY IDENTIFIED AND TARGETED BY IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (ICE) AGENTS

Introduced By: Senators Lawson, LaMountain, Ciccone, Tikoian, Gallo, Ujifusa, Vargas, Acosta, McKenney, and Gu

Date Introduced: April 07, 2026

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, A judge's sworn duty is to faithfully and independently uphold the
2 Constitution and laws of the jurisdiction, ensuring fairness and integrity, a responsibility that
3 Superior Court Judge Joseph J. McBurney unequivocally upheld on November 20th of 2025,
4 when ICE agents unjustly attempted to detain a high school student who was interning for the
5 Judge; and

6 WHEREAS, The incident began when ICE agents took photos of the Judge's intern inside
7 the Licht Judicial Complex, in conflict with standard courthouse rules, and understandably
8 alarming the young intern; and

9 WHEREAS, Judge McBurney offered to drive the intern home, but as they attempted to
10 leave, ICE agents surrounded the Judge's car, demanding everyone to exit the vehicle, and
11 threatening to smash the windows to detain the intern; and

12 WHEREAS, While numerous horrified onlookers watched the tense scene unfolding, ICE
13 agents were confronted by Head of Security Operations for the R.I. Superior Court, Dana Smith
14 who told both the judge and the intern to stay safely inside the car; and

15 WHEREAS, Eventually, the ICE agents checked the high school intern's ID and
16 confirmed that they had misidentified him; and

17 WHEREAS, Supreme Court Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell stated, "This egregious incident
18 underscores both the community's and the Judiciary's concerns about how ICE is conducting its

1 operations in Rhode Island"; and

2 WHEREAS, All Rhode Islanders and the citizens of the United States deserve and have
3 the fundamental and legal right to safety, transparency, and due process, and not the traumatizing
4 chaos and fear escalating in communities across our country; now, therefore be it

5 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby commends Superior
6 Court Judge Joseph McBurney on his valiant intervention efforts on behalf of his wrongfully
7 identified and targeted high school intern by ICE agents; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
9 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Honorable Joseph J. McBurney and Dana
10 Smith.

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