

2026 -- H 8328

LC006138

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE -- COURTS -- PERMITTING
VIRTUAL OR REMOTE COURT HEARINGS

Introduced By: Representatives Diaz, Slater, Felix, Biah, Alzate, J. Lombardi, Hull,
Potter, and Edwards

Date Introduced: March 20, 2026

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 8 of the General Laws entitled "COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE
2 — COURTS" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 20

4 PERMITTING VIRTUAL OR REMOTE COURT HEARINGS

5 **8-20-1. Remote and virtual court appearances permitted.**

6 Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, in all courts of the State of Rhode
7 Island including, but not limited to, the supreme court, superior court, family court, district court,
8 workers' compensation court, and traffic tribunal, any hearing, conference, motion, proceeding, or
9 other court appearance may be conducted in whole or in part by virtual or remote means, as
10 permitted by the court.

11 **8-20-2. Right to remote participation.**

12 Any party to a proceeding including, but not limited to, a plaintiff, defendant, respondent,
13 witness, or attorney of record, shall be permitted to participate in and appear at any court proceeding
14 remotely by using a telephone or video conference connection, subject to reasonable rules and
15 procedures adopted by the court to ensure the orderly administration of justice.

16 **8-20-3. Judicial discretion.**

17 A court may require an in-person appearance upon a specific finding, stated on the record,
18 that a remote appearance would materially prejudice the rights of a party, impair the integrity of

1 [the proceeding, or otherwise interfere with the fair and efficient administration of justice.](#)

2 **8-20-4. Equal legal effect.**

3 [An appearance made remotely pursuant to this section shall have the same force and effect](#)
4 [as an appearance made in person, and no party shall be disadvantaged or prejudiced solely because](#)
5 [such party or attorney appears remotely.](#)

6 **8-20-5. Rules and procedures.**

7 [The chief justice or presiding authority of each court may promulgate rules, administrative](#)
8 [orders, or procedures governing the use of remote or virtual appearances, including standards for](#)
9 [technology, notice, verification of identity, and the creation of an official record.](#)

10 **8-20-6. Accessibility.**

11 [Courts shall endeavor to ensure that remote participation options are reasonably accessible](#)
12 [to self-represented litigants and individuals with disabilities, consistent with applicable state and](#)
13 [federal law.](#)

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

=====
LC006138
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE -- COURTS -- PERMITTING
VIRTUAL OR REMOTE COURT HEARINGS

1 This act would permit all Rhode Island courts to conduct hearings remotely and allow any
2 party or attorney to appear by telephone or video conference, with remote appearances having the
3 same legal effect as in-person appearances.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

=====
LC006138
=====