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ACLU OF RI POSITION: AMEND

**TESTIMONY ON 21 – H 5737
AN ACT RELATING TO FISH AND WILDLIFE – VIOLATIONS
March 17, 2021**

The ACLU of RI is appreciative of the opportunity to provide commentary on this legislation, which would require the public posting of a photo on social media or Internet platforms of any person who has been “convicted of multiple violations on a single occurrence of the provisions” of the chapter concerning fish and wildlife. We urge deletion of this provision, as the this type of punishment would likely encourage inappropriate public shaming and vigilantism, and is excessive in relation to the misdemeanor status of the offenses that trigger this penalty.

Our organization has consistently opposed provisions which could facilitate shaming or humiliation beyond the punishment prescribed for an offense. The financial or carceral consequences of violations of this chapter are already more than sufficient, and the amendments to this bill propose to double the monetary penalties already in place. Further requiring the Department of Environmental Management to navigate a social media or Internet platform for the purposes of publicly posting the photos of individuals who violate this chapter – and in the process essentially create an unofficial public database of “wildlife offenders” – could only be harmful for the individual who has fulfilled their punishment and whose rehabilitation could be sharply impacted by the harassment they may endure as a result of this public shaming for the commission of these offenses.

For these reasons we strongly urge amendment to this legislation with the deletion of the new language on page 2, lines 1-4 of the bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Submitted by: Hannah Stern, Policy Associate