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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

**TESTIMONY ON 24-H 7297,
RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS – OPTICIANS –
QUALIFICATIONS
February 15, 2024**

The ACLU of Rhode Island has no position on the overall intent of this bill addressing apprenticeship programs for opticians, but we do wish to note our support for the proposed repeal of line 6 on page 1 of the bill, which would remove the requirement that a candidate for licensure be “of good moral character.”

We have consistently voiced concerns about standards for professional licensure that are overly vague and could lead to arbitrary denial of licenses, including “good moral character” language which, in addition, could allow for inappropriately expansive consideration of an applicant’s past criminal record, which may be outdated or irrelevant. For these reasons we are appreciative of and support this amendment, which would remove imprecise language from the statute that could facilitate such improper disqualification for justice involved individuals who otherwise meet the professional requirements for licensure as an optician.

This language is in tension with the current Fair Chance Licensing law, R.I.G.L. 28-5.1-14, which restricts the use of a criminal record check to offenses which are directly related to the occupation being sought. For these reasons, we support this proposed amendment in the bill. Thank you for your consideration of our views.