

H O U S I N G



N E T W O R K

March 23, 2024

The Honorable Robert Craven Sr.
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House, Providence RI 02903

Re: SUPPORT for H-7963 – Residential Landlord and Tenant Act – Immigration Status

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island, our 17 member agencies and the low-income Rhode Islanders we seek to serve, I write in support of H-7963, legislation that would prohibit a landlord from inquiring about the immigration or citizenship status of a tenant, prospective tenant, or occupant of a residential rental property, subject to federal laws or regulations.

As the backbone organization for Homes RI, we believe Rhode Island can and should be a state where all residents are able to live in safe, healthy, and affordable homes in thriving communities. It is important that residents searching for a place to live not face additional barriers in the process, and should not be subjected to fear, discrimination, or intimidation by landlords based on their immigration or citizenship status.

Rhode Island has a strong tradition of ensuring that protected groups of people and groups frequently subjected to various forms of oppression are covered under our State's *Fair Housing Practices Act*, which goes further than federal fair housing protections. The General Assembly reinforced this in 2021 by passing legislation to prohibit discrimination based on a tenant's source of income. Passing this legislation will help to further strengthen our current fair housing laws and ensure that our neighbors are not discriminated against based on their immigration status. Similar legislation has been enacted in Colorado and Illinois.

Thank you to the bill sponsors for advancing this important protection for Rhode Islanders and to the Committee for considering this legislation. We strongly urge the Committee to recommend this legislation for passage. I'm happy to answer any questions, please feel free to contact me at (401) 721-5680 ext. 104 or mlodge@housingnetworkri.org.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melina Lodge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melina Lodge
Executive Director