



State of Rhode Island COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

180 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903 – Tel. 401-222-2661

TESTIMONY

BILL NO.: 2025 H 5071
BILL TITLE: An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses – Threats and Extortion
PRIMARY SPONSOR: Representative Read
COMMITTEE: House Judiciary
DATE: 2/4/25

The Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (“Commission”) supports this bill.

The Commission is the state’s primary antidiscrimination law enforcement agency charged with investigating allegations of discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, credit and delivery of services.

This bill would make state government investigators “public officials” for purposes of the prohibition of making threats to public officials.

Commission investigators investigate discrimination cases which raise issues with great emotional impact. A complainant who believes she was sexually harassed or who believes he was terminated because of his disability must provide sensitive information. An employer or landlord who is the subject of a charge of discrimination must also provide sensitive information. In each case that has a recommendation on probable cause by an investigator, either the complainant or the respondent will be seriously disappointed. Complainants must face that their allegations were not believed or that the evidence was insufficient to support their claims of discrimination, or respondents must face the investigator’s conclusion that it is probable that they discriminated. Commission investigators have been subjected to threatening behavior, at least one threat of violence, and in one instance, an investigator was hit by a cane. Considering that these cases involve emotional and financial issues, investigations can easily become volatile.

Because this bill seeks to ensure the safety of Commission investigators and to enable them to serve the public good by investigating without fear, the Commission urges passage.

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