



March 18, 2025

The Honorable, Robert E. Craven, Sr, Chair

House Judiciary Committee

Rhode Island Statehouse

Providence 02903

**RE: Testimony In Support of House Bill No. 5103 – An Act Relating to Property – Rhode Island Fair Housing Practices Act**

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we express our support for House Bill No. 5103, which promotes fair housing access and advances justice for individuals impacted by the criminal legal system. Through both the LIFT UNITED and ADVOCATE UNITED initiatives of our LIVE UNITED 2025 Strategic Plan, we are committed to dismantling systemic barriers to secure housing, breaking the cycle of recidivism, and ensuring equitable opportunity for all Rhode Islanders—regardless of background or past incarceration.

House Bill No. 5103 would prohibit landlords from inquiring about an applicant's prior incarceration and from discriminating against individuals who have served their time and been released from prison. This bill is a critical step in ensuring that housing access is based on current qualifications—not past punishment. Housing stability is one of the most important factors in reducing recidivism and fostering successful reentry. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, formerly incarcerated people are almost 10 times more likely to be homeless than the general public. Discriminatory housing practices exacerbate instability and prevent individuals from rebuilding their lives and contributing to their communities.

Access to safe and affordable housing is a fundamental right. When individuals who have already served their sentence face continued punishment in the form of housing discrimination, we not only harm their future—we jeopardize public safety, community well-being, and economic growth. House Bill No. 5103 strengthens Rhode Island's commitment to second chances and aligns with national best practices that support reentry, housing equity, and economic mobility.

[Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.](#)

Equity is the foundation of a just society. Supporting House Bill No. 5103 will help ensure that all Rhode Islanders—including those with prior justice system involvement—have a fair and equal opportunity to live in stable housing and succeed in life. This legislation is vital to building a safer, more inclusive, and more just Rhode Island. We strongly encourage your support for this bill and urge you to stand with us in eliminating barriers that prevent individuals from rebuilding their lives with dignity.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean

Manager, Government Relations & Policy

United Way Rhode Island

[Elijah.McLean@unitedwayri.org](mailto:Elijah.McLean@unitedwayri.org)