



# State of Rhode Island COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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

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## TESTIMONY

**BILL NO.:** 2025 H 5103  
AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY -- RHODE ISLAND FAIR  
HOUSING PRACTICES ACT  
**PRIMARY SPONSORS:** Representative J. Lombardi  
**COMMITTEE:** House Judiciary  
**DATE:** Mar. 18, 2025

The Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (“Commission”) **requests amendments to 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. Among the allegations investigated by the Commission are those of race, ancestral origin, age, gender identity, sex and disability discrimination. The Commission is the agency responsible for investigating and enforcing the Fair Housing Practices Act, which this bill amends.

**While the Commission supports the goal—protecting formerly incarcerated people from housing discrimination—the Commission would ask that the bill be amended to address its concerns.**

The bill would prohibit property owners from inquiring about previous residences “directly or indirectly, to include, but not limited to, by way of a rental application.” Currently, a landlord may conduct a background check on potential tenants, which might reveal a person’s former residence, whether that is in Adult Correctional Institutions or another property. Would this bill tacitly prohibit a property owner from conducting a background check to avoid indirectly inquiring about a previous address? It is unclear.

The bill does not prohibit inquiring into any offenses that did not result in incarceration or prohibit discrimination on that basis. Generally, an offense resulting in incarceration is more serious than one where the offender received a fine or probation. The bill could potentially allow an owner to inquire about less serious offenses but not more serious ones.

The Commission supports this bill’s goal but foresees some enforcement challenges and asks that the bill be amended to address its concerns.

**Commission contact: Chief Legal Counsel Lauren E. Hill, 401-222-4477,  
lauren.hill@richr.ri.gov**