



**RHODE ISLAND COALITION
OF HOUSING PROVIDERS**

www.ricohp.org

March 16, 2024

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

VIA Email: HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov

RE: Letter in OPPOSITION to House Bill No. 5103

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Rhode Island Coalition of Housing Providers ("the coalition") in strong opposition to House Bill 5103. If passed, this bill would essentially create a new protected class with respect to fair housing, those who have been convicted of a crime and been incarcerated. While we understand the importance of ensuring fair treatment for all individuals, including those with a criminal record, we believe that this bill overlooks critical considerations and could have detrimental consequences for both landlords and tenants alike.

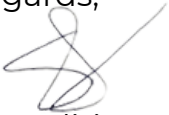
One of the primary concerns with this bill is that it would require landlords to accept any individuals who have been convicted and seen jail time, even those convicted of the most heinous of crimes. This mandate would be without any regard for the safety and well-being of other residents in the same building. Allowing individuals with violent or serious criminal histories to reside in rental properties without proper scrutiny poses a significant risk to the security and peace of mind of other tenants. Landlords need to have the discretion to make informed decisions about potential tenants based on factors such as criminal history to ensure the safety and welfare of all of their residents. This bill appears to put those who have been incarcerated above other law-abiding residents.

Furthermore, the bill's prohibition on landlords inquiring about an applicant's former residence impedes landlords' ability to conduct necessary screening and verification processes. Without the ability to verify an applicant's identity and rental history, landlords are left vulnerable to potential fraud and misrepresentation. This lack of transparency not only undermines the integrity of the rental process but also creates potential legal liabilities for landlords who may unknowingly rent to individuals with false identities or criminal intentions.

While we support efforts to promote fair housing practices, we believe that this bill fails to strike the appropriate balance between protecting the rights of individuals with criminal records and safeguarding the safety and interests of landlords and tenants. We urge you to reconsider the implications of this bill and work towards crafting legislation that addresses these concerns in a more comprehensive and balanced manner.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be a stylized 'S' or 'D' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

RI Coalition of Housing Providers