

Roberta DiMezza

From: Erin Papa <erin.papa@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 1:42 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support: HB 5502

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Dear Chair Craven and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

As a concerned resident of Providence and life-long Rhode Islander, I am writing to express my support for House Bill 5502 that would change the maximum prison sentence for a misdemeanor offense from one year to 364 days.

Under immigration law, certain minor convictions that are punishable by a year or more in prison may lead to detention, denial of necessary forms of immigration relief, and deportation for immigrants. By making a one-day change in the definition of “misdemeanor,” this bill would protect hundreds of Rhode Islanders from these unnecessary, harsh immigration consequences.

It is important to note that, under this bill, judges will still have the discretion to impose prison sentences up to 364 days instead of 365. Passing this legislation would help protect vulnerable members of our immigrant community, including asylum seekers and victims of domestic violence, who otherwise could be barred from immigration relief due to a misdemeanor conviction. States like New York, Washington, and Nevada have amended their criminal codes in recent years in this way to protect their residents against harsh immigration consequences. It is *particularly important at this time* that Rhode Island stand up and take action to protect our community members.

I urge the Committee to approve House Bill 5502 and protect the state’s immigrant community from the harsh consequences of federal law for instances of minor misconduct.

Thank you,

Erin L. Papa, Ph.D.
Resident of Providence, Senate District 7

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