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From: Jonathan Goldman <jgoldman@scijimmigration.org>
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2025 4:46 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Support of H5502

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Dear House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Student Clinic for Immigrant Justice (SCIJ), I am writing to express our support for H5502 which would change the maximum prison sentence for a misdemeanor offense from one year to 364 days. This critical change would protect Rhode Islanders from the devastating immigration consequences that often accompany minor convictions.

Under federal immigration law, a misdemeanor punishable by a year or more in prison can trigger detention, denial of essential immigration relief, and even deportation—regardless of how minor the offense is or how deeply rooted the individual is in our community. The result is an unjust double punishment: one sentence under state law and another, far more severe, under federal immigration law.

By making a simple one-day adjustment to the definition of a misdemeanor, Rhode Island can prevent unnecessary family separations and deportations that disproportionately impact asylum seekers, domestic violence survivors, and long-standing community members.

It is important to note that this bill does not prevent judges from issuing sentences up to 364 days, preserving judicial discretion while shielding immigrants from unjust federal penalties.

Rhode Island has an opportunity to join states like New York, Washington, and Nevada in taking this commonsense step to protect its residents from harmful federal immigration policies. We urge the Committee to approve this legislation and ensure that Rhode Islanders are not unfairly punished by an immigration system that is already stacked against them.

All the best,
Jonathan Goldman | Executive Director
Pronouns: he/him/his ([What's this?](#))
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