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From: Nori Duncan <nori.duncan@gmail.com>
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I support House Bill 5502, which would change the maximum prison sentence for a misdemeanor offense from one year to 364 days.

Several states (New York, Washington, and Nevada) have amended their criminal codes in recent years in this way to protect their residents against harsh immigration consequences.

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.

Under this bill, judges will 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 1-year misdemeanor conviction. We urge the Committee to approve this legislation and protect the state’s immigrant community from the harsh consequences of federal law for instances of minor misconduct.

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