



Hon. Robert E. Craven
Chair of House Judiciary Committee
Members of the House Judiciary Committee

RE: Support for House Bill #5502

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

I write to you as Co-Chair of the Rhode Island Black, Latino, Indigenous, Asian American, and Pacific Islander (RIBLIA) Caucus in strong support of House Bill #5577. Today, our Caucus stands at the largest it's ever been, with 21 members representing communities across our state.

This year, the caucus is prioritizing 15 bills that reflect our unwavering commitment to defending the marginalized and ensuring a fair and equitable future for all Rhode Islanders. **Aligning with our commitment to improving the living and economic conditions of our constituents, the RIBLIA Caucus supports House Bill #5502.**

Under current law, a misdemeanor conviction that carries a potential 365-day sentence can subject lawful immigrants — including long-time residents, asylum seekers, and survivors of domestic violence — to deportation. A minor, first-time offense, such as shoplifting, should not lead to the separation of families or exile of individuals who have built their lives in our state.

The legislation's one-day modification could mean a world of difference to some immigrants and their families by addressing a mismatch in the way Rhode Island law overlaps with federal law. Specifically, under the immigration laws, certain minor convictions that are punishable by a year or more in prison can lead to detention 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 unduly harsh consequences. To give an example, a long-time lawful permanent resident (green card holder) who is convicted for a first-time shoplifting misdemeanor and given no jail time can be deported and exiled from their family and home because this offense, like all misdemeanors, carries a potential prison sentence of one year, and is further considered under immigration law to be a "crime of moral turpitude". If the statutory penalty were no more than 364 days instead of 365, however, the threat of deportation would disappear. The bill will also help protect asylum seekers and victims of domestic violence who can currently be barred from immigration relief due to a misdemeanor conviction.

Members of the RIBLIA Caucus urge passage of this bill. Thank you for your consideration of our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DM", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rep. David Morales
Co-Chair RIBLIA Caucus