



Testimony in Support

H5010: Equity Impact Statement Bill

House Rules Committee

January 15, 2025

Dear Chair and Members of the House Rules Committee,

My name is Awilda Reinoso Lopez, Senior Policy & Research Manager, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Latino Policy Institute (LPI) to express our strong support for H5010. This bill urges the Rhode Island House of Representatives to adopt rules for including equity impact statements in legislative processes.

As an organization dedicated to advancing equitable policies that uplift historically marginalized communities—particularly Latino communities—we see this bill as a pivotal step toward creating a more just Rhode Island. Equity impact statements offer more than just a layer of analysis; they make a framework for accountability and a commitment to equity in every legislative decision.

Rhode Island's Latino community has long contributed to our state's social, economic, and cultural fabric. However, Latinos continue to face systemic barriers in education, housing, healthcare, and economic opportunity. These inequities are not due to individual failings but policies historically overlooked or undervalued our communities. Equity impact statements are essential to ensuring that future legislation does not perpetuate these disparities but instead works to address and eliminate them.

While others will eloquently outline the technical benefits of equity impact statements—such as reducing disparities, preventing unintended harm, and promoting informed decision-making—I want to emphasize the human cost of inaction, particularly for Rhode Island's growing Latino population. For too long, policies, even those with good intentions, have exacerbated the disparities they aim to address. This is not for lack of compassion but for lack of a deliberate, data-driven tool that assesses the real-world impacts of proposed legislation.

Equity impact statements will allow lawmakers to anticipate consequences and craft policies that intentionally move us closer to fairness. For Rhode Island's Latino community, this means greater access to opportunity, representation, and the tools needed to thrive. This is about ensuring that the voices of those who have long been excluded from decision-making—Latino families, workers, students, and business owners—are represented and valued.

Equity is not a fleeting trend; it's a vital commitment to fairness and justice that requires sustained action. With this tool in place, we can move beyond good intentions to tangible,

systemic change that benefits all Rhode Islanders, including the Latino community, representing a vibrant and essential part of our state's future.

Thank you for considering this important legislation and for your commitment to a more equitable Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Awilda Reinoso Lopez

Senior Policy & Research Manager

Latino Policy Institute