



March 18, 2025

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House, 82 Smith Street, Providence RI 02903

RE: SUPPORT for H-5920 – *Rhode Island Fair Housing Practice Act*

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island, our member agencies, and the low-income Rhode Islanders we seek to serve, I write in support of H-5920, the *Rhode Island Fair Housing Practices Act*. This bill proposes amendments to the *Rhode Island Fair Housing Practices Act* to clarify definitions related to assistance and service animals, “housing status” as a protected class, makes unlawful the issuance of discriminatory notices or statements related to the sale, rental or leasing of housing, and removes a provision prohibiting parties from publicly discussing their fair housing cases.

We write to express support for all provisions of the bill but will focus our support on the definition of “housing status. We know that many Rhode Islanders face housing discrimination due to their prior or current housing status. However, we cannot make progress towards ending homelessness if Rhode Islanders who are exiting shelter or other non-traditional housing arrangements continue to face hurdles to accessing stable housing based on that fact. H-5920 adds “housing status” to fair housing protections and clarifies how the enforcement agency may pursue cases alleging discrimination based on housing status. We hope with this clarification to the language; the proposed bill will help increase access to housing for the people who most need it. In addition, we appreciate the addition of “notices and statements” to expand upon prohibited discriminatory advertising of housing for sale, lease or rent.

We appreciate the Commission for Human Rights and the bill sponsors for introducing this legislation, as well as the Committee for your consideration. I’m happy to answer any questions the Committee might have, please feel free to contact me at (401) 721-5680 ext. 104 or mlodge@housingnetworkri.org.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melina Lodge".

Melina Lodge, Executive Director