

To the Members of the House Labor Committee of the Rhode Island Legislature:

We are writing to bring your attention to **Bill H 5401: An Act Relating to Public Property and Works – Minority Business Enterprise** sponsored in the House Labor Committee by Representative Anastasia P. Williams. This bill aims to remove Portuguese businesses from those eligible to be considered a certified minority for purposes of awarding public works contracts.

This issue has been raised many times before in past years, and in our view, it is **DISCRIMINATORY** against the Portuguese community, which at 9.7% is clearly a minority of the population in the State of Rhode Island. We would also like to emphasize that people of Portuguese origins can be of any race including Black/African-American (from Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, São Tomé e Príncipe), Asian (from Goa, East Timor, Macau) or ethnically as Latino (from Brazil) in addition to Portugal. It seems that the language of the proposed bill citing “Portuguese...regardless of race” blatantly discriminates against ANY person of Portuguese origin.

At a time when so many businesses are struggling to stay afloat during this COVID-19 economy, this Bill, if enacted into law, would further suppress Portuguese minority business opportunity.

We suggest, instead, that the legislature consider raising the cap on minority certified opportunities so that all minority certified businesses, including the Portuguese, can survive and thrive during this most challenging time.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Angela Costa Simoes
Chair, Board of Directors