

Roberta DiMezza

From: Sandi Warner <sandiwarner@warnerrealtygr.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 11:46 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Support H5504 - Emotional Support Animals

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Dear Committee Clerk DiMezza,

The lack of clarity and confusion around ESA vs Service Animals leads to a lot of problems for homeowners. Clarifying the rules serves all involved.

Please support H5504, which ensures that only individuals with verified disabilities qualify for emotional support animals (ESAs). Landlords are permitted to request valid documentation from licensed Rhode Island healthcare professionals to confirm the tenant's need for an ESA, but they cannot refuse housing solely due to the presence of an ESA. The goal of this legislation is to strike a balance between the rights of tenants who require emotional support animals and the concerns of housing providers.

This bill establishes a clear legal process for the acceptance of ESAs. It aligns state service animal laws with federal regulations, designates dogs and cats as recognized emotional support animals, and outlines the types of documentation landlords can request. Additionally, it requires applicants to have an established relationship with a Rhode Island medical professional for at least 30 days before providing documentation verifying their need for an ESA. This language is already part of law in several other states.

Sincerely,

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