

Testimony in Support of H 5674  
House Judiciary Committee  
Submitted by Samuel Cramer  
March 18, 2025

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

The Rhode Island Center for Justice submits this written testimony in support of passage of H 5674, relating to inquiries regarding immigration or citizenship status in residential housing. The Center for Justice practices landlord tenant law and represents over 1,000 Rhode Islanders each year in court proceedings, advising thousands more about their rights under state and federal law. Through this work, we have become familiar with the unique challenges faced by immigrant communities and mixed-status households as they seek safe and stable housing.

Immigrants and individuals from immigrant communities already face systematic barriers and vulnerabilities in securing stable housing. In our experience advising thousands of tenants every year, we have witnessed how even routine inquiries into immigration or citizenship status—no matter how innocently intended—trigger intense anxiety and fear for many tenants. Given the broader climate of hostility, these questions can lead to intimidation, discrimination, and harassment. Individuals who already live in fear due to their immigration status or that of their loved ones should not have their housing stability further threatened by unnecessary inquiries. By prohibiting intrusive and irrelevant questions about immigration or citizenship status, H 5674 protects tenants' basic rights, dignity, and peace of mind.

Furthermore, H 5674 balances tenant protections with legitimate landlord interests. The bill explicitly allows landlords to request information necessary to fulfill specific federal legal obligations. It ensures property owners can continue to responsibly manage their properties while removing opportunities for discriminatory or intrusive practices that do nothing to assess a tenant's suitability.

By adopting H 5674, Rhode Island would join numerous states and municipalities that have recognized the importance of safeguarding immigrant communities against unnecessary discrimination and intimidation in housing. In a state facing unprecedented challenges in housing affordability and availability, this bill can ensure that all Rhode Islanders can pursue secure housing free from fear or harassment, regardless of immigration status.

We strongly encourage this committee to recommend passage of H 5674, affirming Rhode Island's commitment to fair housing practices and basic human dignity.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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