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**RHODE ISLAND COALITION  
OF HOUSING PROVIDERS**

[www.ricohp.org](http://www.ricohp.org)

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March 15, 2025

To Honorable Representative Robert E. Craven, Sr.  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903  
VIA Email: [HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov](mailto:HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov)

RE: Letter in OPPOSITION to House Bill No. 5920

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Rhode Island Coalition of Housing Providers ("the coalition") in strong opposition to House Bill 5920. The coalition represents a diverse group of housing providers throughout the State of Rhode Island all striving to provide safe and quality housing. While we understand the importance of ensuring fair and equitable access to housing for all individuals, we have significant concerns about the potential implications and unintended consequences of this legislation.

There are significant unintended consequences to adding "housing status" as a protected class. Importantly, if passed the law would create a situation where a landlord could not inquire about a prospective applicant's prior rental history, inquire as to their current address, and even confirm the applicant's identity because doing so will require an address which may be protected under this law. Stopping a landlord from conducting regular due diligence on any applicant is a cause for serious concern and may create unsafe situations for other residents of the same property.

Expanding the protections for "assistance animals" in rental properties, making them akin to professionally trained service animals without appropriate safeguards could lead to abuse and exploitation of the system, undermining the rights of landlords and potentially compromising the well-being and safety of other tenants.

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While we fully support the rights of individuals with disabilities to have assistance animals as reasonable accommodations under the Fair Housing Act, it is essential to maintain integrity in the accommodation process and prevent fraudulent claims that may erode trust and credibility within the housing community. Legislating that an untrained “assistance animal” requires the same protection as a professionally trained “service animal” without any safeguards may have a negative impact on those who need those accommodations the most.

Furthermore, adding “housing status” as a protected class for discrimination purposes may inadvertently create undue burdens and legal liabilities for landlords, property managers, and housing providers. While discrimination based on housing status is a legitimate concern, the proposed legislation risks conflating socio-economic status with other protected classes, such as race, gender, disability, or religion, thereby diluting the effectiveness of existing anti-discrimination laws and undermining efforts to combat systemic discrimination and promote equality.

We respectfully urge you to reconsider the proposed bill and explore alternative strategies that promote housing accessibility, protect property rights, and combat discrimination in a manner that is fair, transparent, and effective. Let us work together to develop pragmatic solutions that address the diverse needs and challenges of our communities while upholding the principles of fairness, equity, and justice.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Shannon', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Shannon Elizabeth Weinstein  
On Behalf of The RI Coalition of Housing Providers