

PVD

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Hon. Robert E. Craven, Sr., Chairperson, House Committee on Judiciary,
et al. sitting Judiciary Committee Members, Rhode Island General Assembly

Amnesty International USA Local Group 1016

ITEM: H5502

POSITION: SUPPORT

To The Esteemed Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

Thank you for considering House Bill 5502, which seeks to shield documented migrants in Rhode Island from deportation actions when found guilty of a misdemeanor. The immigration system has a loophole that is triggered when receiving sentences of one year or longer. By shortening the definition of “one year” in RI’s misdemeanor statutes from 365 days to 364, documented migrants can serve their time and rejoin society when their debt has been paid.

Without this redefinition, we leave countless families, communities, and workplaces at grave risk of tragedy. A loved one or coworker, who is doing everything they are supposed to do to stay documented, but who makes a mistake that earns them a “one year” sentence, will no longer be around. Their homes, businesses, and churches will be shattered instead by a forever sentence, as the federal government detains or removes them. With such a redefinition, our Generals Laws will help keep the fabric of our communities intact and strong.

Closing this loophole will send a clear message to our documented residents that our State respects their good faith efforts to pursue the American dream. It signals that we will protect them from arbitrary limits on their health, wealth and pursuit of happiness. This includes the freedoms enshrined on our Bill of Rights, including the rights afforded by the criminal justice system to a fair trial and all other franchises. It should also serve as a signal to those who may seek to undermine the system of laws, Constitutional rights, and separation of powers that have held this country up as a beacon of light for centuries: we will remain compassionate and

welcoming. We will remain true to our values. We will support in every way possible those who enrich our communities.

Amnesty PVD strongly urges the Committee to consider this bill favorably and pass it to the House floor for a full vote.