



State of Rhode Island COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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TESTIMONY

BILL NO.: 2025 H 6122
BILL TITLE: An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – Civil Rights of People with Disabilities
PRIMARY SPONSOR: Representative McNamara
COMMITTEE: House Judiciary
HEARING DATE: 4/8/25

The Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (“Commission”) supports this bill.

The Commission is the state’s primary antidiscrimination law enforcement agency charged with investigating allegations of discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, credit and delivery of services. Among the laws over which the Commission has jurisdiction (along with the Governor’s Commission on Disabilities and the Rhode Island Department of Education) is Title 42, Chapter 87 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, the Civil Rights of People with Disabilities Act (“CRPDA”), which prohibits discrimination based on disability.

Rhode Island’s strong support for disability rights is exemplified by the CRPDA, which was first passed in 1983. The CRPDA’s definition of prohibited discrimination includes references to federal law protections, including those found in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794 (“Section 504”). Section 504 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by those who receive federal funds. To date, Section 504 has had a robust set of regulations and expansive case law that provide carefully thought-out and extensive protections. The Commission fears that these regulations and case law interpretations are in danger of being truncated by a pending federal court suit in Texas, as well as by Executive Orders and other agency actions of the current federal administration which does not prioritize civil rights.

H 6122 seeks to amend the CRPDA to provide that, in the event any provision of Section 504 (or implementing regulations) prohibiting discrimination is repealed or nullified by a federal judicial or executive branch action, the law applied in Rhode Island would be the law in effect on the date immediately prior to the date of the repeal or revocation. H 6122 thus seeks to prevent the evisceration of protection by providing that the standard to be used for discrimination under Rhode Island law is the strong standard currently in place.

The Rhode Island General Assembly has been a steadfast supporter of disability rights and the Commission urges you to continue that support by passing this bill.

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