



501 (C)(3) IRS-APPROVED NON-PROFIT

Rhode Island House of Representatives,
State House,
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for House Bill 7198

Dear Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of New Bridges for Haitian Success, Inc. (NB4HS), I write to express our strong support for House Bill 7198, which would amend the maximum sentence for a misdemeanor offense from one year to 364 days.

Under current federal immigration law, even minor state convictions carrying a potential sentence of one year or more can trigger severe immigration consequences, including detention, ineligibility for critical forms of relief, and deportation. A one-day adjustment in the statutory definition of a misdemeanor would prevent these disproportionate outcomes and protect hundreds of Rhode Islanders from life-altering federal penalties for low-level offenses.

Importantly, this legislation preserves full judicial discretion. Judges would retain the authority to impose sentences of up to 364 days when appropriate. What changes is not the court's power, but the unnecessary exposure of immigrants—including asylum seekers, survivors of domestic violence, and long-standing community members—to harsh federal consequences that were never intended for minor misconduct.

Rhode Island would join states such as New York, Washington, and Nevada, which have already enacted similar reforms to shield their residents from unintended immigration penalties. House Bill 7198 represents a practical, narrowly tailored, and humane adjustment that aligns state sentencing law with the realities of federal immigration enforcement.

We respectfully urge the Committee to approve this legislation and help safeguard Rhode Island's immigrant community from disproportionate and unjust federal outcomes.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.
Respectfully submitted,
Bernard Georges