



The Rhode Island State
Council of Churches

Rhode Island State Council of Churches and the Rhode Island Bible Society

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March 4, 2026

On behalf of the Rhode Island State Council of Churches, I am writing to express our support for House Bill 7198 that would change the maximum prison sentence for a misdemeanor offense from one year to 364 days.

Under immigration law, certain minor convictions that are punishable by a year or more in prison often lead to detention, denial of necessary forms of immigration relief, and deportation for immigrants. By making a one-day change in the definition of “misdemeanor,” this bill would protect hundreds of Rhode Islanders from these unnecessary, harsh immigration consequences.

It is important to note that, under this bill, judges will still have the discretion to impose prison sentences up to 364 days instead of 365. Passing this legislation would help protect vulnerable members of our immigrant community, including asylum seekers and victims of domestic violence, who otherwise could be barred from immigration relief due to a misdemeanor conviction. Other states have amended their criminal codes in recent years in this way to protect their residents against harsh immigration consequences. We can do this in Rhode Island as well. We urge the Committee to approve this legislation and protect the state’s immigrant community from the unnecessarily harsh consequences of federal law for instances of minor misconduct.

Rev. Charles Blustein Ortman

2nd Vice President and Immigration Commissioner

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