

Dear Chair Hagan McEntee, House Judiciary Members, and Representative Lombardi,

Our names are Alexandra Turco and Evyn Keating, and we are fourth-year medical students at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University.

We are writing in strong support of House Bill 7034, which seeks to address housing discrimination against formerly incarcerated individuals by prohibiting landlords from inquiring about a person's incarceration history. This issue has far-reaching implications for our patients, both those with and without involvement in the justice system, as well as for the broader healthcare system in Rhode Island. Our support for this bill stems from our firm belief that its passage would meaningfully address both immediate and long-term health needs of our community.

As medical students, we have had the privilege of working with justice-involved patients across a range of clinical and community settings. We have cared for incarcerated individuals in the inpatient setting, including patients transferred from the Rhode Island Adult Correctional Institutions with acute medical needs. We have also contributed to the longitudinal care of formerly incarcerated patients through the Street Medicine Initiative. In this role, we provide medical services such as triage, antibiotics, wound care, and psychiatric evaluations to those currently experiencing homelessness throughout Rhode Island. In addition, we have provided health education to incarcerated youth at the Rhode Island Training School and participated in the psychiatric care of justice-involved youth through our work with the HOPE for Justice Clinic, an outpatient program dedicated to expanding access to mental health services for youth involved in the legal and child welfare systems.

Through these experiences, we have witnessed firsthand the profound impact that stable housing has on health outcomes, continuity of care, and overall well-being. We have also seen how structural barriers can perpetuate cycles of instability, worsen chronic illness, and increase reliance on emergency and inpatient services. While housing discrimination remains legal in Rhode Island, arbitrarily linking past carceral history to housing stability creates a dangerous cycle of homelessness and trauma. We have seen clients who are unable to secure safe and stable housing despite a clear demonstrated desire to re-integrate into their communities post-incarceration. Our patients suffer as a result of housing discrimination, with downstream effects on our medical system and our communities.

We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the care of Rhode Island's justice-involved population, and we strongly urge the General Assembly to support policies that reflect a commitment to this underserved community. Passage of House Bill 7034 would represent an important step toward advancing health equity and improving outcomes for some of our most vulnerable patients.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to demonstrate our support for House Bill 7034. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Evyn Keating and Alexandra Turco