

## Ariana Costa

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**From:** bounce@bounce.votervoice.net on behalf of Kristofer Kretsch <user@votervoice.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 17, 2026 10:29 AM  
**To:** House Judiciary Committee  
**Subject:** Oppose H7034 (making criminals a protected class)

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

Dear Committee Clerk DiMezza,

It's unfortunate, but this bill should be renamed the Jeffrey Epstein Bill because it would remove the ability for a landlord to deny Jeffrey Epstein an apartment after his 2008 conviction and prison sentence. It would have given Jeffrey Epstein the same protected status in seeking housing as the women he abused, and as people facing discrimination based on race and gender. I understand that this is not the intent of the bill authors, but this is indeed one of the unintended effects of this bill. Furthermore, my tenants know why I background check and want me to keep doing it. It's why they don't view background checks as a barrier to housing, they view it as a necessary part of life. I, as a landlord, can't solve the past issues of the criminal justice system and this bill certainly does not do that either. Being reformed is not just fulfilling a jail sentence, it is giving back to the community after the sentence, and that can be demonstrated and submitted on a rental application. Conversely giving fair housing status for past incarceration is dangerous and sends the wrong message. It says that incarceration was something inherent that individuals could not control or choose.

While the intent of House Bill 7034 is to prevent housing discrimination, the legislation as written creates significant risks for property owners, existing tenants, and the Rhode Island housing market at large. By prohibiting landlords from considering prior incarceration, the bill removes a critical tool for maintaining safe and stable communities.

Restricting a landlord's ability to screen for violent offenses or serious criminal history - including sex offenses - places other tenants and families at risk. Without this information, property owners face increased legal liability and higher insurance premiums.

This bill prohibits landlords from asking a prospective tenant for their previous address. Without that information a credit and background check cannot be completed.

Landlords must be able to assess risks related to fraud, property damage, and financial instability. Forcing owners to rent "blind" increases the likelihood of lease violations, non-payment, and costly eviction proceedings.

These added risks may discourage investment in the rental market. Owners may choose to convert units into condominiums or short-term rentals to avoid these regulations, ultimately reducing the supply of affordable housing and driving up rents for everyone.

Responsible, long-term tenants deserve to feel secure in their homes. If landlords cannot ensure a safe environment, rental communities may face higher turnover rates as residents seek safer housing elsewhere.

A more balanced approach is needed, one that supports the rehabilitation of formerly incarcerated individuals without stripping property owners of their right to make informed decisions. I urge the legislature to seek a solution that protects the rights of all Rhode Islanders to live in safe, well-managed communities.

Sincerely,

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