



The RI FREEDOM Collective

March 16, 2026 - IN SUPPORT OF H7034

Dear Chairperson McEntee and members of the Judiciary Committee,

The RI Freedom Collective is submitting this written testimony in strong support of H7034, An Act Relating to Property – Rhode Island Fair Housing Practices Act.

H7034 makes a focused but important update to Rhode Island's fair housing laws by explicitly prohibiting housing discrimination on the basis of prior incarceration. The bill bars landlords from asking about an applicant's incarceration history, from advertising in a way that discourages people with prior incarceration from applying, and from denying or delaying housing based solely on that history. At the same time, the bill preserves existing protections that allow landlords to deny tenancy where an individual's tenancy would pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others or cause substantial damage to property. In other words, it targets blanket, status-based discrimination while preserving case-by-case safety judgments.

Stable housing is one of the most important foundations for successful reentry, employment, and family stability. When a past incarceration, sometimes long ago and unrelated to housing, operates as an automatic barrier to rental housing, it increases the risk of homelessness and makes successful reintegration much more difficult. That outcome harms not only individuals and their families, but also public safety and community well-being. H7034 helps ensure that applicants are evaluated on legitimate, neutral criteria such as current income, references, and conduct, rather than on a history that may no longer reflect who they are or how they will perform as tenants. By adding "prior incarceration" alongside existing protected characteristics in the Fair Housing Practices Act, H7034 brings Rhode Island's laws in line with our values of fairness, second chances, and public safety. It is a logical next step in the General Assembly's ongoing work to prevent arbitrary exclusion from housing, including prior efforts to protect tenants who rely on lawful non-wage income such as vouchers and disability benefits.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to pass H7034. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
The RI Freedom Collective



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