



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



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Michael D. Évora, Esquire  
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**TESTIMONY**

BILL NO.: 2026 H 7768  
BILL TITLE: An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Fair Employment Practices  
PRIMARY SPONSOR: Representative John G. Edwards  
COMMITTEE: House Committee on Labor  
DATE: 4/15/26

***The Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (“Commission”) supports this bill.***

The Commission is the state’s primary antidiscrimination law enforcement agency charged with investigating alleged violations of state and federal anti-discrimination laws. Among the laws over which the Commission has jurisdiction is the Fair Employment Practices Act, Title 28, Chapter 5 of the General Laws of Rhode Island (“FEPA”).

This bill seeks to amend R.I. Gen. Laws § 28-5-7(6) to restore individual employee liability for harassment and other discriminatory actions under the FEPA. Holding individual employees liable for their own discriminatory actions is not novel. For several decades, the Commission interpreted this section to permit individual employee liability based upon the section’s plain language. The Commission routinely accepted discrimination charges which named employees as alleged wrongdoers. That changed, however, in 2017 with the Rhode Island Supreme Court’s decision in *Mancini v. City of Providence*, 155 A.3d 159 (R.I. 2017), when the Court ruled that the FEPA does not provide for individual employee liability.

As a result of the *Mancini* decision, victims of discrimination in Rhode Island can no longer seek legal redress under the FEPA, including cease-and-desist orders and mandatory training, from coworkers or superiors who have discriminated against or harassed them. Moreover, pursuant to *Mancini*, even though an employer might have taken prompt and effective remedial action to address a reported claim of harassment, that employer must be named as the sole respondent in a discrimination case filed under the FEPA because the victim has no other recourse. Restoring



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individual liability, as this bill seeks to do, would enable a victim to seek redress from the actual perpetrator of the unlawful treatment, placing the blame where it rightfully lies.

If passed into law, this bill would not only provide employees with necessary protection from harassment and other forms of discrimination but would benefit employers as well. Restoring individual liability would relieve employers of the potential liability resulting from their employees' actions—as well as the costs and burdens of taking appropriate corrective measures—by deterring employees from engaging in harassment and other discriminatory actions in the first place.

**The Commission strongly urges the Committee to pass this bill because it restores an important protection to employees and ensures that victims of discrimination in the workplace will have an avenue for redress. Moreover, the bill presents no new obligations on employers and, in fact, could help protect employers from potential liability.**

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