



State of Rhode Island COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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TESTIMONY

BILL NO.: 2026 H 7958
BILL TITLE: An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Fair Employment Practices
PRIMARY SPONSOR: Representative Furtado
COMMITTEE: House Labor
DATE: April 15, 2026

The Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (“Commission”) **requests an amendment** to this bill.

The Commission is the state’s primary antidiscrimination law enforcement agency charged with investigating allegations of discrimination based on categories such as race, sex, disability and age in employment, housing, public accommodations and credit.

H 7958 essentially is an amendment to Title 37, Chapter 13, Labor and Payment of Debts by Contractors. It provides that any contract for capital improvements to a healthcare facility is subject to the requirements of Title 37, Chapter 13. **Since it relates to the provisions of that chapter, the Commission submits that it should be an amendment to that chapter – it could be added as § 37-13-3.3.** As it is currently worded, the bill gives enforcement to the Commission for Human Right under the state law prohibiting discrimination in employment, the Fair Employment Practices Act, Title 28, Chapter 5 (“FEPA”). The purpose of the FEPA is “to foster the employment of all individuals in this state in accordance with their fullest capacities, regardless of their race or color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age, or country of ancestral origin, and to safeguard their right to obtain and hold employment without such discrimination.” § 28-5-3. The Commission and its investigators’ expertise is in investigating charges of unfair practices based on protected categories, such as race and sex, not in enforcing payment of wages by contractors. **Therefore, the Commission requests the bill be amended to delete references to Chapter 28-5 and have the bill’s protections enforced in the same manner as other contractor payment violations covered by Title 37, Chapter 13.**

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