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ACLU OF RI POSITION: AMEND

TESTIMONY ON 26-H 7922 AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS – SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY March 19, 2026

The ACLU of Rhode Island has no position on this legislation generally, which seeks to modernize and reconcile two statutes relating to speech-language pathologists and audiologists.

However, we are concerned about outdated language on Page 20 which concerns the denial, suspension, and revocation of a license. Specifically, Sec. 5-48.2-7(a)(11) permits the licensing board to “deny, suspend, or revoke any license” if the individual is “convicted of, or plead[s] guilty or nolo contendere to, a felony, whether or not any appeal or another proceeding is pending to have the conviction or plea set aside.”

We are concerned that this language is inconsistent with the Fair Chance Licensing Act (FCLA), whose adoption we strongly supported. The FCLA prevents Rhode Islanders from arbitrarily being denied an occupational license because of a criminal record. The General Assembly passed the FCLA in 2020 to help ensure that justice-involved and formerly incarcerated individuals are not inappropriately prevented from obtaining state occupational licenses based solely or in part on a criminal record. By allowing a license to be denied, suspended, or revoked simply because an individual has been convicted of a felony and without considering that impact on the duties of their profession undermines the goals of the FCLA.

The language considering licensees being “habitually intemperate or addicted to the use of habit-forming drugs” as reasons for license denial or revocation is similarly outdated. Sec. 5-48.2-7(a)(13). We would note that the General Assembly has moved towards different language regarding this situation. As one example, we would point to the language in R.I.G.L. 5-92-29(4), which governs licensing for genetic counselors, and which provides that licenses can be reconsidered when a licensee has “used illicit drugs or intoxicating liquors to an extent which adversely affects his or her practice.”

Thank you for considering our views.