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## **ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT**

### **TESTIMONY ON 26-H 7938, RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY – REGISTRATION OF NURSING ASSISTANTS – QUALIFYING LANGUAGE April 14, 2026**

The ACLU of Rhode Island supports this legislation which would require the examination for licensing of certified nursing assistants to be administered in both English and Spanish.

Eliminating an exclusive English language requirement will encourage more Spanish-speaking individuals to seek certification in this field. Expanding access to the exam will help address longstanding language obstacles that have limited entry into a number of professional fields and allow more qualified candidates to enter the caregiving workforce. Opening access to this profession will also benefit Spanish-speaking patients, which makes up a sizable percentage of the state's population. Finally, this will help hospitals as well, since state law appropriately imposes an obligation on them to have qualified interpreters available to assist with patients. R.I.G.L. § 23-17-54(a).

When caregivers and patients can communicate effectively, it establishes greater comfort, trust, and understanding. All of which contribute to a greater quality of care and better health outcomes. Notably, proctoring the exam in Spanish does not change the standards of the test, but rather ensures that applicants are evaluated on their knowledge and skills, rather than their English proficiency. This directly contributes to continued fairness in the licensing process while ensuring that applicants are knowledgeable in their field.

Thank you for considering our views.