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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT/AMEND

TESTIMONY ON 25-H 6122, RELATING TO CIVIL RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES April 8, 2025

The ACLU of Rhode Island supports this bill, which is designed to ensure strong statutory protections remain in place in Rhode Island for individuals with disabilities if an important federal law on the subject, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, is struck down by the federal courts. However, we encourage the adoption of an amendment to avoid any confusion about the bill's reach.

Rhode Island currently has its own very strong anti-discrimination laws that provide legal protection to individuals with disabilities – as well as other protected classes – in a variety of contexts. In fact, the General Assembly has on occasion strengthened the state's laws in response to federal court decisions that have weakened the interpretation of the relevant federal laws.

It is for that reason that we would request an amendment to the bill on Page 2, line 1, to add the words "**at a minimum**" after the word "include". The purpose of this amendment is to make sure that any weaker interpretations of the relevant federal law are not inadvertently incorporated into Rhode Island's legal protections.

Thank you for considering our views.