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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF 20-S 2258,  
RELATING TO PROPERTY – IMMIGRATION STATUS  
February 27, 2020**

This bill bars landlords from inquiring about a tenant or prospective tenant's immigration or citizenship status, and further bars municipalities from requiring such inquiries. The ACLU of RI strongly supports this legislation.

The possibility of discrimination against legal immigrants, permanent residents, and even US citizens is greatly increased when landlords have the opportunity to make inquiries like these, which should be none of their business. Such inquiries are essentially a proxy for discriminating against individuals based on their appearance, surname, ethnicity, race or similar inappropriate characteristics.

We know this is a real problem in Rhode Island; this actually happens. It is a special burden for mixed families that consist of both documented and undocumented family members. Landlords simply should not be allowed to play the role of immigration agents.

Other states – as diverse as California, Michigan, and North Carolina – have enacted laws protecting immigrants' access to housing, and Rhode Island should do the same. Shelter is a basic necessity of life. Denying people the right to obtain it – or discouraging them from even applying for it – on the basis of irrelevant and discriminatory inquiries should not be allowed.

We urge passage of this bill.