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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

TESTIMONY ON 25-S 512, RELATING TO RESIDENTIAL TENANT'S RIGHT TO LEGAL REPRESENTATION ACT Mahy 6, 2025

Especially in the past few years, the acute need for healthy, equitable, safe, and accessible housing and robust tenant protections has become abundantly clear. For this reason, the ACLU of RI is in support of this bill, which provides for the services of legal counsel to individuals who are engaged in an eviction matter and unable to afford an attorney to represent them.

Especially for indigent tenants who may be facing adverse housing actions, asking such individuals to navigate a complex court system without adequate legal supports and effective resources only engenders circumstances where the deck is stacked against them from the outset. Instead, allowing access to legal assistance will often be the difference between maintaining housing for a family or homelessness.

Everybody is aware that housing in Rhode Island is in a dire situation, and the importance of stable and affordable housing is indisputable. Ensuring that clients in the most need of legal counsel will be provided it at such a crucial moment provides an important due process protection and increases equity in a complicated and stressful system. We therefore support this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.