



National Association of Social Workers

220 West Exchange Street, Suite 007

Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Telephone ▪ 401-274-4940

Facsimile ▪ 401-274-4941

rhodeislandnasw@gmail.com

www.rinasw.info

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers – Rhode Island Chapter (NASW – RI with over 1,050 professional social workers who live and work in Rhode Island), I am writing in support of the comprehensive racial profiling prevention bill H-5263. This legislation would mandate law enforcement to provide written and/or electronic documentation of “probable cause” or “reasonable suspicion” leading to the search of motor vehicles pulled over by police, as well as the documentation of events at each motor vehicle stop. These and other measures are included to provide more analytical information regarding the interactions between officers and stopped drivers. We believe it is important for law enforcement departments to reflect upon inconsistencies that may exist in collected information and address any concerns indicated by the data. We also believe a key problem is that information is not transparent, which increases the possibility that actions or lack of actions by police departments may be misunderstood by constituents living in town and urban municipalities.

Academically scrutinized vetted studies have shown that there is a discrepancy between the number of stops where contraband is found when looking at racial factors. While scrutinizing stops involving minority and white ratios, there are more stops of minorities with less contraband found, percentage wise, compared to stops involving Caucasian individuals.

Law enforcement personnel rely on communities to report criminal activity. The result of racial profiling, regardless of intentionality, can promote fear within a community and may prevent individuals from contacting police in the event of a crime occurring. Racial minority communities may also fear or resist interacting with law enforcement officials due to direct or indirect experiences with racial profiling incidences. This resulting lack of cooperation may result in increased crime within communities as well as individuals who have experienced racial profiling remaining silent.

It is crucial that this legislation is adopted by law enforcement officials to ensure that “pretext” stops are done in an ethical manner and not used for racial profiling. NASW-RI does not believe that “pretext” stops are intentional; however, it may be the culture of the environment in which these law enforcement officials work that make it not readily apparent to those who engage in such practices. Even if the majority of police officers do not engage in racial profiling, it is still necessary that the state mandates uniform protocol regarding this problem in order to ensure that racial minorities and juveniles are not stopped unjustly and that all Rhode Islanders feel safe within our state.

Sincerely,

Miranda Cummings - NASW-RI Representative

(Reviewed and edited by Rick Harris, LICSW - Executive Director, NASW - RI)