

# Real Estate Fair Housing Licensure Education

2021 Legislative Agenda

## House Bill: H 5268

Sponsored by Representatives Diaz, Slater

## Senate Bill: S 413

Sponsored by Senators Quezada, Calkin, Murray, Lawson, Bell

## Legislative Explanation

[H 5268](#) and [S 413](#) require applicants to pass a course which includes topics on fair housing as part of the required 24 hours of continuing education for licensure. A Sub A has been proposed by the Rhode Island Association of REALTORS® (RIAR) that would require all licensees, including reciprocal licensees and attorneys, to take continuing education, including three hours of fair housing classes every two years. The Sub A will also add new language to the fair housing law and cross-reference it in the real estate license law.

## Issue Background

REALTORS®, including those members of the Rhode Island Association of REALTORS®, recognize the impact of the Fair Housing Act on every American's ability to purchase a home free of discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or national origin.

Our members are increasingly concerned about disparities in homeownership and complaints filed from prospective tenants. Although discrimination in housing is against the law, structural and explicit bias has closed the door on too many Americans and their ability to achieve the American dream. To reconfirm our association's commitment to fair housing, RIAR proposes mandating fair housing education during pre-licensing education and the subsequent required continuing education renewal periods. While there are plenty of examples of flagrant fair housing violations, there are instances when an agent's unconscious practice

could unknowingly discriminate. This legislation is intended to help real estate licensees and the consumers they serve become aware of not only overt, but implicit biases as well.

## Please let your Representatives and Senators Know:

### Homeownership Rates Tell a Story.

- The [gap in the homeownership rate](#) between black and white households is the highest it has been in 50 years.
- From 2016-2019, the non-Hispanic White American homeownership rate has been steadily above 71%, while the homeownership rate for Black Americans has been 30 percentage points less.
- For Hispanic Americans, the homeownership rate has held above 45%, and for Asian Americans, it has been above 53% over the same period.

### REALTORS® are committed to equity in the housing market.

- In a progressively multicultural America, making diversity a core business strategy is a business essential for success.
- RIAR's commitment to diversity and inclusion will require our association to educate members that serve their diverse clientele sensitively, equally and professionally always.
- RIAR believes that it is every real estate licensee's moral responsibility to recognize the historic practices of the real estate industry, while working tirelessly to remedy these wrongs.

### Accountability is Key.

- Passage of new regulatory obligations that aim to educate licensees on the inherent bias that exists in today's real estate market must include:
  - Effective fair housing training courses;
  - A regulatory system that holds people accountable for conduct violating fair housing obligations; and
  - Required continuing education during every license renewal period.