

ADLER POLLOCK & SHEEHAN P.C.

CLIENT ADVISORY

EMPLOYER ALERT

Homeless Persons' Bill of Rights

The General Assembly has enacted a statute creating a “bill of rights” for persons experiencing homelessness. The rights now guaranteed to homeless persons include the right “not to face discrimination while seeking or maintaining employment due to ... lack of permanent mailing address or ... mailing address being that of a shelter or social service provider.” The statute, which amends the Rhode Island Fair Housing Practices Act, has arguably rendered homeless persons a new protected class under employment law. Inclusion of homelessness as an unlawful basis upon which to (a) fail to hire a job applicant or (b) terminate a worker’s employment makes it even more important for employers to document the *legitimate business reasons* for hiring and firing decisions. Managerial personnel responsible for interviewing job applicants, hiring, evaluating employee job performance, and termination decisions should be made aware of the new law, and employers should take measures to keep the fact of an employee’s homelessness confidential, to be disclosed in the workplace only on a need-to-know basis.

For further information regarding this statute please contact Lori Caron Silveira at (401) 274-7200 or lsilveira@apslaw.com