



**H5855/Support H5854/Support H5853/Support H5852/Support H5261/Support**

Chairwoman Williams and Distinguished Members of the House Committee on Labor,

Carpenters Local Union 330, which represents working and retired Carpenters across Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts, writes today to urge the swift passage of H5855, which would expand worker protections under the Rhode Island Whistleblower Protection Act and increase potential awards to plaintiffs upon proven violation of the act.

Both the Federal and the Rhode Island Whistleblower Protection Act were written to protect workers report crimes committed by their employer from direct retaliation. While it is easy to understand that firing or demoting an employee for reporting crime constitutes retaliation, other, more insidious forms of retaliation, such as baselessly reporting the whistleblower to an immigration law enforcement agency, are currently not specified in the law.

This is not because it does not happen. In fact, it has happened enough across New England that it has created a prevailing fear amongst immigrant workers, with or without documentation, that reporting blatant crimes committed against themselves or their coworkers will result in getting tangled up in an immigration investigation. These workers have expressed these fears to union representatives and workers' center organizers. This fear creates uncooperative witnesses, which makes it very difficult for investigatory agencies like the Department of Labor and Training or the Attorney General to properly investigate and charge cases of wage theft or other forms of exploitation.

We believe the passage of this bill is an important step in making *all* Rhode Island workers feel safer to report crimes that occur in their workplace, which not only benefits our workforce and the employers that do the right thing, but Rhode Island consumers as well.

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