



March 4, 2025

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr., Chairman  
House Corporations Committee  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H.5591, An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Vehicle Barriers – The Charlotte A. Vacca Act

Dear Chairman Solomon,

The undersigned members of the Rhode Island Business Coalition are writing to express concerns regarding House Bill 5591, which mandates that commercial property owners install vehicle barriers at retail establishment locations. While we understand the intent behind this legislation to improve public safety, we believe that the bill's current provisions could place undue financial strain on businesses, particularly those in the retail sector, and have unintended negative consequences on the local economy.

The requirement to install vehicle barriers presents several challenges for business owners. First, the upfront cost of installation and the ongoing maintenance of such barriers could be prohibitive, especially for small and medium-sized businesses. Many retail establishments are already operating on tight margins, and the financial burden imposed by this mandate could limit their ability to reinvest in other critical areas, such as hiring, improving customer experiences, or expanding their services.

In addition, the bill does not account for the varied types of retail establishments, many of which may not be in need of vehicle barriers given the nature of their locations or the level of traffic they experience. Forcing all businesses, regardless of their specific circumstances, to implement this requirement could result in unnecessary costs for property owners who would not benefit from such installations. This one-size-fits-all approach risks unfairly burdening businesses that do not present significant safety concerns related to vehicle access.

Retail establishments are already struggling to compete as consumers continue to buy more items online. Adding this requirement for retail stores may further dissuade business owners from opening brick and mortar location and commercial property owners from renting to them. The proposed mandate could also create logistical challenges for businesses in urban areas or those located in historic districts where the installation of vehicle barriers may not be feasible due to zoning restrictions, limited space, or aesthetic considerations.

The Rhode Island Business Coalition represents 50 industries and 6,280 businesses that employ 231,200 people throughout Rhode Island.

Rather than imposing a blanket requirement for vehicle barriers, we encourage the legislature to explore alternatives, such as providing businesses with flexibility in meeting safety standards based on their specific circumstances, or offering grants or incentives to assist with the cost of these installations. We appreciate the proposed language that permits insurers to consider discounts on property insurance premiums for those establishments that install barriers, however we are still concerned with the cost and other considerations noted above.

As members of the business community, we are committed to working to find solutions that enhance public safety while supporting a healthy and thriving business environment. We respectfully ask that you reconsider the broad applicability of the vehicle barrier requirement in H.5591.

Thank you for your consideration of our position on this issue. We look forward to continuing the conversation and collaborating to develop policies that benefit both public safety and the business community.

Sincerely,

East Greenwich Chamber of Commerce

National Federation of Independent Business

Rhode Island Business Group on Health

Rhode Island Hospitality Association

Rhode Island Staffing Association

Small Business Economic Summit Regulations Subcommittee

Small Business Summit Tax and Budget Committee

cc. House Corporations Committee members