



To: Chair Joseph J. Solomon, Jr. and Members, House Committee on Corporations  
From: Jessica David, President of Local Return  
Date: March 12, 2025  
Subject: Testimony in support of House Bills 5551, 5552, and 5553

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. **I write today to express our strong support of House Bill 5552 allowing for local enforcement of Robinson-Patman Act violations.**

Local Return is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building community wealth in historically disinvested neighborhoods in Rhode Island through community ownership and investment. We work to keep assets local, end economic leakages, and stop financial extraction. The Robinson-Patman Act is a critical antitrust law that prohibits price discrimination by suppliers.

When the federal government stopped enforcing the Act in the 1980s, Rhode Island—like other states—began to see the rapid decline of independent grocers and domination of a few large retailers. This was followed by higher prices and food deserts in vulnerable communities. It is important to remember that, before this, independent grocers thrived in the United States, accounting for more than 50% of grocery sales between the 1930s and 1980s. In 2022, the four largest grocery stores alone claim more than 55% of grocery sales. Our neighborhoods and people are ill served by this lack of diversity. Allowing Rhode Island's attorney general and private businesses the right to sue for damages caused by price discrimination sends the message that Rhode Island will not tolerate corporate abuse.

**We also support H5551**, which would regulate the use of electronic shelving labels to prevent retailers from taking advantage of consumers with surge pricing, **and H5553**, which would simply require that grocery stores offer all consumers an in-store way to claim digital coupons. Even as technology makes innovation possible, it is critical that we do not leave behind people who lack access to, literacy with, or desire for digital devices.

**Thank you for your attention to these critical issues.** We are very grateful that the General Assembly is considering important ways to level the playing field for local retailers and Rhode Island consumers.