

April 2, 2026

The Honorable Joseph Solomon
Chair, House Corporations Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Chairman Solomon and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the RI Hospitality Association, we respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to H 7179.

The safety of guests, employees, and pedestrians is a top priority for every hospitality operator. Any effort to reduce the risk of vehicle-related incidents is important and worthy of thoughtful consideration.

That said, H 7179 creates significant challenges that could hinder the development of new hospitality projects in Rhode Island.


New restaurant and hotel development is already a complex and costly process. Projects must navigate rising construction costs, high interest rates, permitting requirements, and tight financing conditions. Adding a new mandate requiring the installation of vehicle barriers in all qualifying projects, regardless of site-specific risk or layout, introduces additional costs and design constraints that can make projects financially challenging.

Hospitality developments are highly dependent on the efficient use of space. Many projects, particularly in urban areas or along Rhode Island's waterfronts, operate within tight footprints, often with extremely limited parking availability. Requiring vehicle barriers may reduce available parking, interfere with traffic flow, or limit the ability to incorporate outdoor dining and pedestrian-friendly design elements that are essential to a project's success.

While the bill includes an exception related to parking configurations, it still applies broadly without accounting for the wide variety of site conditions and existing safety measures that developers already incorporate. Modern design standards often include curbing, landscaping, elevation changes, and traffic patterns that mitigate risk in ways that are more appropriate to the specific property than a uniform barrier requirement.

The bill also references potential insurance discounts, but there is no certainty that these savings would meaningfully offset the upfront capital costs. Those discounts are subject to actuarial approval and may vary, leaving developers with guaranteed costs and uncertain benefits.

Rhode Island benefits from continued investment in new restaurants, hotels, and mixed-use developments that create jobs, activate commercial corridors, and drive tourism. Policies that add cost and rigidity to new construction without flexibility for site-specific conditions risk slowing that investment at a time when economic growth is critically important.

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If the General Assembly wishes to address this issue, we would encourage a more flexible approach that allows for site-specific safety assessments, recognizes alternative design solutions, and considers incentives rather than mandates.


For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to oppose H 7179.


Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ryan Moot
Manager of Government Affairs
Rhode Island Hospitality Association

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