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March 31, 2026

House Committee on Environmental and Natural Resources
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H7918

The Rhode Island Water Works Association (RIWWA) is a professional trade organization that represents water supplies of the State of Rhode Island.

We are writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed legislation that would amend Rhode Island law governing the frequency of backflow prevention assembly testing—changing the requirement from annual testing to once every ten years, with exceptions only in cases of emergency or public health crisis.

Backflow prevention assemblies are mechanical systems. Like all mechanical equipment, they are inherently subject to wear, corrosion, and eventual failure. Annual testing is not an arbitrary regulatory burden; it is a scientifically grounded, industry-standard practice recommended by manufacturers and reinforced by plumbing codes for good reason. Extending the testing interval to ten years would introduce a significant and preventable risk to public health.

A failed backflow assembly can allow contaminated water to enter the public water distribution system. Without routine annual testing, such failures could go undetected for years. The proposed exception for emergencies and public health crises fundamentally misses the purpose of preventative maintenance. Annual testing exists precisely to prevent these emergencies from occurring. By the time a failure escalates to a public health crisis, the harm—to both public safety and public confidence—will already have been done.

There is also the critical issue of accountability. Should a contamination event occur under a weakened testing standard, determining responsibility—whether it lies with property owners, business operators, or policymakers—will be both complex and contentious.

It is important to recognize that the current annual testing requirement was established through careful collaboration among the Rhode Island Department of Health, the Rhode Island Backflow Association, water districts, and the plumbing community. This standard reflects years of professional expertise and a shared commitment to safeguarding the public water supply.

I respectfully urge you to reject this proposed change and to uphold the existing annual testing requirement. The health and safety of Rhode Island residents, as well as the integrity of the state's public water system, depend on maintaining these proven protections.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

If you have any questions or require any additional information, please contact me at (401) 529-2090.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jessica Lynch', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jessica Lynch, P.E.
President

CC RIWWA Executive Board