



Rhode Island Insurance Federation

February 26, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House, Room 205
Providence, RI 02903
Delivered via e-mail HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov

RE: House Bill 7750— Provides for punitive damages in civil actions—Rhode Island Insurance Federation Statement in Opposition.

Dear Chair McEntee:

The Rhode Island Insurance Federation submits this statement in opposition of House Bill No. 7750, which provides for punitive damages in civil actions where there is willful or wanton conduct or a reckless disregard for health, safety and welfare.

This legislation does not cap punitive awards nor does it set in statute the evidentiary standards for such civil actions. Together this can lead to a substantial increase in awarded damages, increases the likelihood for nuclear verdicts, and diminishes a level of predictability in outcomes that insurers rely upon to accurately assess the risk profile of our policyholders.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Institute for Legal Reform (ILR), The median punitive awards in our country increased from \$35 million in 2017 to more than \$87 million in 2022, with the mean topping \$690 million in 2022. Additionally, a Marathon Strategies report found that 2024 had the most nuclear verdicts (over \$10 million) *“since 2009, and a 52% increase over 2023. The total sum of these verdicts reached an eyepopping \$31.3 billion, a 116% increase over 2023.”* Punitive damages are becoming a hidden cost for consumers and businesses alike, as the awards are becoming much larger than necessary for effective deterrence.

Rhode Island already has punitive damages scattered throughout the statutory framework, which allows policymakers to take a surgical approach to permitting these awards. However, this legislation’s applicability to all civil actions will likely have a consequential impact on the business community and future economic development of Rhode Island.

For the reasons set forth above, the Federation opposes House Bill 7750, and we urge the Committee to indefinitely postpone further action on this legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher S. Stark
Executive Director
Rhode Island Insurance Federation
cstark@rhodeislandinsurancefederation.org