

## Roberta DiMezza

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**From:** Kelly Cairo <kcairo@provchamber.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 10, 2026 12:24 PM  
**To:** House Judiciary Committee  
**Cc:** Rep. Baginski, Jacquelyn M.; Cara Cromwell  
**Subject:** H 8044 - SUPPORT

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March 10, 2026

The Honorable Carol McEntee, Chair  
House Judiciary Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903  
[HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov](mailto:HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov)

H 8044 – SUPPORT

Dear Chairman McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Retail Federation and our member businesses across the state, I am writing to express our strong support for H 8044 and to thank Representative Baginski for introducing this important legislation.

Organized retail crime continues to evolve in Rhode Island, and the latest gift card scheme is particularly troubling because it directly targets families and unsuspecting consumers. Criminals are removing gift cards from retail displays, altering the packaging or magnetic strips, and then returning the cards to store shelves. When a parent, grandparent, or friend later purchases and activates the card, the funds are immediately diverted to accounts controlled by the perpetrators. The intended recipient never receives the gift, and Rhode Island consumers are left bearing the financial loss.

Retailers are not standing still. Our members are investing in stronger in-store safeguards, employee training, and consumer awareness efforts to combat this scheme. At the same time, they are working closely with local and state law enforcement to identify suspects, share information, and support investigations. This collaboration reflects a shared commitment to protecting customers and holding offenders accountable.

However, under current law, a significant statutory gap limits our collective ability to respond effectively. Because a gift card has no monetary value until it is loaded at the register, individuals found in possession of large quantities of altered cards cannot always be charged with larceny. This technical limitation prevents prosecutors from fully addressing what is clearly an organized and profitable criminal enterprise.

H 8044 would close that gap and provide prosecutors with a clear and practical tool to bring these criminals to justice. By establishing appropriate penalties for the possession of altered or fraudulently modified gift cards with intent to steal, the bill strengthens enforcement efforts and sends a clear message that Rhode Island will not tolerate organized retail theft.

Retailers and police are working hard — together — to combat organized retail crime. Passage of H 8044 will reinforce those efforts and ensure that our laws keep pace with evolving criminal tactics.

The Rhode Island Retail Federation respectfully urges the Committee's favorable consideration of H 8044. Thank you for your time and continued commitment to protecting Rhode Island businesses and consumers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laurie White".

Laurie White  
President  
Rhode Island Retail Federation

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