



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT AFL-CIO

To: House Labor Committee

From: Frank Flynn

Date: February 1, 2024

Re: **Banning Captive Audience Meetings**

Testimony in **Support of H 7106** (Rep. Craven and Rep. Shanley, et al.)

On behalf of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals we strongly support House Bill 7106 and thank Chair Craven and Representative Shanley for sponsoring it. This bill would prohibit employers from mandating “captive audience meetings” with employees to discuss matters of a religious or political nature.

The first amendment of the Constitution of the United States guarantees a person’s right to free speech. This bill is designed to protect workers from offensive or unwanted political speech which is unrelated to their role as an employee by allowing them to opt out of a meeting without fear of retaliation or discipline.

This bill clearly does not in any way impede an employers’ right to communicate information to an employee on any matters relative to their work, performance, company policies, or health and safety protocols, etc. It simply allows employees the right to refuse to participate in meetings of a religious or political nature.

There have been numerous incidents throughout the nation in which employers have forced employees to attend meetings supporting a specific political ideology, anti-union rhetoric, or religious doctrine. This bill establishes, in law, a clear standard for both employees and employers to follow with regard to non-work-related meetings held within the workplace.

Thank you for your consideration. **We urge you to pass this bill.**

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