



February 1, 2024

Virgil Soares, Butler Hospital

To the Honorable Members of the House Committee on Labor,  
Rhode Island House of Representatives

Subject: Support for House Bill 7106

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Virgil Soares. Since 1997, when I began my career at Butler Hospital at the age of 17, I have seen and experienced the vital role that a supportive work environment plays. In those early days, I worked in the dietary department, which was in the midst of joining the 1199 union.

My commitment to my work was recognized by everyone, including my supervisors. However, during the unionizing process, I faced significant pressure from the management. They visited my house several times, pressuring me to vote against the union, and implicitly threatened my job security.

The situation escalated the day before the union vote. I was called into the manager's office and terminated, simply due to the suspicion that I was going to vote 'yes'. I asked to finish my shift, and during that time, my coworkers rallied in my support. They collectively confronted the management, stating that my termination was a mistake. This incident not only demonstrated our unity but also the lengths to which the management would go to undermine our efforts.

Fast forward to 2024, as the head chef in the same department, I, along with my united team, take great pride in our contribution to patient care. We strive to uphold Butler Hospital's mission in mental health care.

House Bill 7106 is critical. It ensures that workers can perform their duties without fear of unjust treatment and can openly support initiatives like unionizing, which I believe are essential for a healthy, fair workplace.

I urge you to pass this bill and protect the rights of workers in Rhode Island.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Virgil Soares