



March 5th, 2025

Hon. Arthur Corvese
Chairman
House Committee on Labor
State House
Providence, RI 02903
HouseLabor@rilegislature.gov

Re: H-5505 – An Act Relating to Public Property and Works – Labor and Payment of Debts by Contractors

Dear Chairman Corvese,

I am the Government Affairs Director for the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, District Council 11.(IUPAT DC 11) We represent hundreds of working families here in the state of Rhode Island in a variety of finishing crafts.

We are writing in strong SUPPORT for H-5505.

We continue to battle daily to secure work opportunities for our members. Our signatory contractors whom we treat as business partners are constantly seeking to bid on public works renovation and construction in the state. They are often passed over for fly by night low ball bidders who we suspect of engaging in fraudulent practices.

This proposed legislation would make a positive impact in the industry in ensuring the local law-abiding contractors secure bids and can put the members we represent to work on tax payer funded projects.

On public works projects over \$1,000 contractors are required to pay their trade workers an established prevailing wage rate pursuant to R.I. Gen. Law § 37-13-1 *et seq.* The rate, established by the state Department of Labor and Training, is the combination of a base hourly wage rate plus a fringe benefit amount. The benefit includes an established amount for healthcare, retirement, and workplace safety benefits. However, the law does not require contractors provide the actual benefit, only a purported cash equivalent, and in many instances that is exactly what they do. Contractors pay the purported cash equivalent as additional wages as opposed to providing the actual retirement benefits to their workers. This is not only contrary to the legislative intent of our prevailing wage laws, but it is also a competitive advantage for these contractors not to provide the actual benefit.

**International Union of Painters and Allied Trades
District Council 11**

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This legislation will:

- Provide an avenue for working Rhode Islanders to be able to retire in dignity.
- Level the playing field for contractors, ensuring they are paying workers similar hourly and fringe benefits.
- Hold unscrupulous contractors responsible for not paying their workers the appropriate, and predetermined, wages and fringe benefits.

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For the above reasons, **IUPAT DC 11** is in full support of HB 5505, and we urge the Rhode Island House of Representatives to pass this important piece of legislation. Thank you, Chairman Corvese, for your leadership in supporting this legislation. Please do not hesitate to follow up with any additional questions you, or the committee, has on this legislation.

Sincerely,

Justin Kelley (jkelley@iupatdc11.com)

Justin Kelley

Business Representative/ Government Affairs Director

District Council 11, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades

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