



March 5, 2025

Honorable Arthur J. Corvese  
Chairman, House Labor Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H5943 - AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS - HOLIDAY BUSINESS

Dear Chairman Corvese and Honorable Members of the House Labor Committee:

As the Executive Director of Rhode Island Business Leaders Alliance (the “Alliance”), I am grateful for the opportunity to provide the House Labor Committee with this written testimony in support of H5943 - AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS - HOLIDAY BUSINESS, which provides that all employees of retail establishments with fifteen (15) or more employees engaged in work during Sundays or holidays shall receive from their employer no less than time and a half.

The Alliance is a group of Rhode Island business leaders, trade associations, and educational institutions who are concerned about seeing the Ocean State ranked at the bottom of national business climate surveys year after year and want to do something about it. We have come together in an unprecedented alliance with a positive, forward-looking vision for our state: to revitalize Rhode Island’s struggling economy and to create broad-based economic growth and opportunity for all Rhode Islanders. Our group’s ambitious goal is nothing short of the wholesale transformation of Rhode Island into a national model of economic competitiveness.

The Alliance supports common sense legislative efforts that make it easier to do business here in Rhode Island—particularly for small businesses that are the backbone of our state’s economy. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, small retail establishments across Rhode Island have faced unprecedented economic challenges, including stubborn inflation, dramatic year-over-year increases in utility costs, lingering supply chain disruptions, a highly competitive labor market, and rising interest rates. For this reason, the Alliance supports H5943 as it seeks to reform

Rhode Island's antiquated, outdated, and anti-competitive Sunday and holiday premium pay laws, thereby reducing the cost of doing business for our small retail employers.

When Massachusetts finally phased out its Sunday and holiday premium pay requirements on January 1, 2023, Rhode Island earned the dubious distinction of becoming the only state in the country to require most employers to pay premium pay to non-exempt employees for hours worked on legal holidays. We are now a national outlier.

Many small retail establishments choose not to open on Sundays and legal holidays or limit business hours to avoid the burden and expense of paying time and a half to their non-exempt employees. It is simply too expensive to open their doors.

If Rhode Island is going to compete with neighboring Connecticut and Massachusetts to attract new business development and to retain businesses that are considering relocating to states with more favorable business climates, drastic action is required. Rhode Island cannot build an economy focused on meeting the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century if our small businesses are overburdened by laws—like our Sunday and holiday premium pay laws—that are making Rhode Island less competitive than surrounding states or, in this case, every other state in the United States.

In closing, it is worthwhile to note that H5943 balances the interests of small business owners in obtaining relief from burdensome employer mandates with the interests of organized labor in negotiating collective bargaining agreements that require time and half pay for Sunday and holiday work. H5943 would reduce operating costs for small retail establishments at a time when many are struggling to keep their doors open, while providing labor unions with the flexibility that they need to advocate for their members. It is a win-win.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and please feel free to contact me to continue this important conversation.

Respectfully submitted by:

*Gregory Tumolo*

Gregory Tumolo, Executive Director  
Rhode Island Business Leaders Alliance