



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:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Society of Certified Public Accountants (RISCPA), I submit this testimony in strong support of H.5943 - AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS - HOLIDAY BUSINESS. This legislation provides that retail establishments with fewer than fifteen (15) employees will no longer be required to pay time and a half to hourly, non-exempt employees who work on Sundays and legal holidays in the absence of a collective bargaining agreement or employment contract.

Importantly, this bill is narrowly tailored to assist very small businesses and does not affect existing labor or union agreements. The majority of our CPA members represent numerous retail businesses that have chosen not to open on Sundays and holidays because, in most cases, they cannot operate profitably under the current wage requirements. This challenge is further compounded by the fact that competitors in neighboring states do not face the same mandate. Rhode Island has witnessed a staggering number of small business closures over the past two years. As businesses continue to grapple with skyrocketing energy costs and other inflationary pressures, this legislation presents a necessary step toward financial stability and sustainability.

Small businesses are the backbone of Rhode Island's economy, creating jobs and contributing to the vibrancy of our communities. Accordingly, bills like H.5943 that eliminate burdensome employer mandates, reduce barriers to growth and expansion, and facilitate business operations are crucial for small retail establishments to survive and thrive.

**Rhode Island Society of CPAs 2155 Diamond Hill Road, Cumberland, RI 02864**

Retail establishments across Rhode Island are currently facing unprecedented economic challenges, including:

- Persistent inflation, with the cost of goods, materials, and supplies remaining stubbornly high.
- Dramatic year-over-year increases in utility costs, with CPAs observing spikes of up to 300%.
- Lingering supply chain disruptions stemming from the pandemic and uncertainty over U.S. tariff policies.
- Intense competition from large corporations and online retailers.
- A highly competitive labor market, making it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain talent.
- Lack of access to capital due to rising interest rates.

The confluence of these factors makes it increasingly difficult for small retail establishments to remain viable. By eliminating the requirement for these businesses to pay time and a half to hourly, non-exempt employees for work performed on Sundays and legal holidays (absent a collective bargaining agreement or employment contract), the General Assembly will take a meaningful step toward improving Rhode Island's overall business climate.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support for H.5943 and encourage its swift passage.

Sincerely,

*Melissa Travis*

Melissa Travis  
President/CEO  
Rhode Island Society of Certified Public Accountants/RI Business Forum  
Chair  
Rhode Island Business Leaders Alliance