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March 17, 2025

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese
House Labor Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Narragansett Bay Commission; House Bill 5683; Against

Dear Chairperson Corvese and Members of the Committee:


Thank you for taking the time to consider the Narragansett Bay Commission's (NBC) position on House Bill 5683. While the objectives of the bill are admirable, I am writing to express the NBC's concerns with H5683, which will increase the minimum percent that must be awarded to minority business enterprises (MBEs) for procurement and construction projects from fifteen percent to twenty percent and require ten percent of that twenty percent to be women owned businesses.

Despite best efforts, satisfying the current requirement, which was recently increased from ten to fifteen percent in 2023, is challenging, and often results in delays to projects that are essential and necessary to NBC's functions and operations. Unfortunately, there are a limited number of entities certified as MBEs in Rhode Island. As such, the pool of qualified MBEs is insufficient to meet the overall demands in the state, making it quite difficult for the NBC to achieve the existing fifteen percent requirement. Increasing the minimum percent that must be awarded to MBEs for procurement and construction projects to twenty percent would make it much more challenging and is not an achievable goal. It would undoubtedly cause additional delays to the NBC's procurement processes and ultimately significant delays to the progression of essential projects, a number of which the NBC must complete in accordance with federally mandated timelines.

While the NBC appreciates the bill's attempts to support the fullest possible participation of minority and women owned businesses, the challenges it presents will most certainly cause risk and unnecessary delays. To that end, the NBC respectfully opposes House Bill 5683 and urges the legislature to give due consideration to this bill's unintended consequences.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

 Jennifer J. Harrington, Esquire
General Counsel and Legislative Liaison