

Dear Council members-

I'm writing in support of House Bill 5940, the "Opportunity Employee Ownership Act." I was an employee of White Electric Coffee from 2014 to 2019, when it was owned by Tom and Heather Toupin, and I played a supportive role during the transition from single ownership to a worker-cooperative model. Having gone through that process, I am fully in support of any effort to make such transitions easier. We were successful for many reasons - we had extensive community support, unstructured paid time [due to the Covid-19 lockdown], and a sense of friendship amongst the employees that transcended our working hours. But it was not easy, by any stretch, and oftentimes [at least to me] it felt like we were cutting a new path through the forest.

After the sale went through and we got the keys, I got to experience [first-hand and for the first time in my life] the collaborative energy and communal responsibility of true democratic co-ownership. I sincerely hope that exponentially more Rhode Islanders [and Americans] have the opportunity to have that experience, and that they may arrive at it with more state-sponsored support.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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