



To: House Committee on Labor
From: Erich Haslehurst, National Education Association Rhode Island
Date: April 2, 2025
Re: Support of H5506 EMPLOYEE FREE SPEECH RIGHTS IN WORKPLACE

Dear Chairman Corvese and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the National Education Association Rhode Island and our 12K members, we strongly support House Bill 5506.

This bill would prohibit employers from requiring their employees to participate in discussions or activities that are focused on either religion or politics. No one, regardless of their vocation, should be subjected to any religious or political speech while at work, most especially when it is wholly unrelated to the job they are performing, and when it is not wanted or sought after. When such occurrences take place, workers need to know that they may choose to not participate by opting out without fear of retribution or loss of employment.

This bill is specific to this type of "required communication" and does not infringe on an employer's ability to communicate with their employees about work-related matters and does not interfere with co-workers, regardless of hierarchy, from having casual conversation that might include these topics, so long as they are not required to participate.

We thank the Committee for your consideration and urge you to bring this bill to the floor with a recommendation of passage.