



February 4, 2026

The Honorable Chair Representative Arthur J. Corvese
Chair, House Labor Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Opposition to H.7121 – WORKPLACE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY ACT

Dear Chair Corvese and Members of the House Labor Committee,

The Northeastern Retail Lumber Association (NRLA) represents local, family-owned businesses in the lumber and building materials (LBM) industry, along with associated manufacturers and distributors. In Rhode Island, our membership includes the Rhode Island Lumber & Building Materials Dealers Association (RILBMDA), which represents over 20 member locations. The LBM industry in Rhode Island employs more than 3,000 residents, offering good-paying jobs with long-term career pathways.

Our members are key suppliers to the state's housing and construction industry, providing the essential materials that builders and contractors rely on. Additionally, through our educational foundation, we invest heavily in workforce development, offering industry-recognized certifications and training for crane operators, forklift drivers, and building materials specialists, among many other careers.

We strongly believe that no one should be bullied or made to feel uncomfortable in the workplace. Every employer has a responsibility to foster a professional, respectful work environment, and NRLA members take this responsibility seriously. However, workplace culture is best shaped by employer policies, not government mandates.

1. This Bill Empowers Those Who Seek to Exploit the System

While the stated goal of this bill is to prevent workplace bullying, H 5132 will do the opposite by creating a powerful tool for those who seek to manipulate the system. Instead of stopping harmful workplace behaviors, this legislation opens the door for personal grievances to be escalated into legal threats. Subjective claims of discomfort could turn normal interactions into legal battles, putting both good employees and responsible employers in jeopardy.

This will not create a better workplace environment. Instead, it will create division, discourage open communication, and foster an atmosphere of fear rather than professionalism. Businesses should be focused on fostering a culture of respect, not navigating legal threats based on unclear and subjective standards.

2. The Fear of Legal Consequences Will Harm Workplace Morale

Rather than encouraging a positive workplace culture, this bill will introduce fear into every interaction. Employees and managers will be forced to second-guess every conversation, hesitant to provide constructive feedback, enforce workplace policies, or even engage in normal discussions. Instead of fostering an open dialogue, this bill will create an environment where employees and employers alike are afraid to communicate.

A healthy workplace is built on mutual trust and accountability, not legal threats. Laws should not dictate interpersonal workplace dynamics. Employees should feel comfortable raising concerns, and employers should be able to address them without fear that every interaction could result in a lawsuit.

3. Subjective and Vague Language Will Lead to Misuse

H 5132 defines "psychological abuse" and "toxic work environment" in broad, subjective terms that lack clarity and consistency. These vague definitions make it impossible for employers to set clear expectations and enforce workplace policies fairly. Everyday management actions such as performance reviews, disciplinary actions, and enforcing attendance policies could easily be mischaracterized as psychological harm.

Laws must be clear and enforceable. This bill fails to provide the necessary legal clarity, creating a situation where businesses will struggle to understand what is allowed and what could be considered a violation. The end result will be uncertainty, inconsistency, and a flood of unnecessary legal challenges.

4. Rhode Island Businesses Are Already Held Accountable

Employers are already subject to strict workplace protections at both the state and federal levels. Existing laws such as OSHA regulations, anti-harassment and anti-discrimination laws, the Civil Rights Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act provide robust protections for employees. These laws already hold bad actors accountable and provide employees with clear avenues for addressing workplace issues.

Rather than introducing redundant and overly broad legislation, policymakers should focus on enforcing the laws that already exist. Adding unnecessary legal risks for employers will not improve workplace conditions but will create additional confusion and burden businesses with excessive regulations.

Conclusion

We all agree that no one should be bullied at work, but legislating feelings and interpersonal dynamics is not the solution. Instead of broad and vague regulations, we should promote strong internal policies, industry best practices, and professional management training to address workplace concerns without unnecessary legal intervention.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Francis Palasieski

Francis Palasieski

Director of Government Affairs

Northeastern Retail Lumber Association (NRLA)

fpalasieski@nrla.org

Direct Line: 518-880-6376 | nrla.org