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March 5, 2026

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

Dear Chairman Corvese and Committee Members,

The Northern RI Chamber of Commerce (NRICC) represents businesses in the communities of Burrillville, Central Falls, Cumberland, Foster, Glocester, Johnston, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Scituate, Smithfield and Woonsocket. The Chamber opposes the passage of H.7440, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Employment Security - Benefits

This bill provides unemployment benefits to striking workers that are locked out as a part of the striking process. Strikes and lockouts are part of the labor negotiation process, often arising from disagreements over wages, working conditions, or other terms of employment. These actions are typically voluntary on the part of the employees and should not be viewed as a situation of involuntary unemployment.

Unemployment benefits are designed to assist individuals who lose their jobs due to circumstances beyond their control, such as layoffs or business closures. However, when workers engage in strikes or are locked out as part of a labor dispute, they are actively choosing to withhold their labor or are being temporarily excluded from the workplace as part of a negotiated dispute.

Providing unemployment benefits to striking workers undermines the purpose of these benefits and creates a precedent where workers may expect financial assistance despite choosing to engage in a work stoppage. It risks incentivizing labor disruptions rather than encouraging both employers and employees to reach mutually beneficial resolutions in a timely manner. Furthermore, it is essential that any system providing unemployment assistance is focused on supporting workers in true need, rather than serving as a financial buffer for those engaging in collective bargaining strategies.

We ask the committee to take no action on H.7440.

Respectfully,

Monika P. Zuluaga
President & CEO