



March 18, 2026

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese

Chair, House Labor Committee

Room 101 State House

82 Smith Street

Providence, RI 02903

Via Email: HouseLabor@rilegislature.gov

Dear Chair Corvese:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Retail Federation, I write to **oppose H-7771, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Minimum Wage** which would set the minimum wage in 2027 at \$24 per hour.

By way of quick introduction, The Rhode Island Retail Federation is an entity of the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce which has as its members large and small retail owners and operators throughout the state. As a subset of the National Retail Federation, we work passionately to stand up for the people, policies and ideas that help the retail industry succeed. Nationally, retail is the nation's largest private sector employer, contributing approximately \$5.3 trillion to the annual GDP.

As you are no doubt aware, small and big box stores alike operate on thin margins and continuous wage increases can force difficult choices including staff reductions, reduced hours for employees, potential scaling back of operations and delayed hiring. Often, wage increases that cannot be absorbed by the store

owner/operator must get passed on to the customer, further burdening Rhode Island families at time when they can ill afford increased prices at our grocery, convenience and retail stores.

The proposed hourly rate increases from \$16 per hour, effective just this year, to \$24 per hour in one short year, which represents a staggering 50 percent increase. This would be the largest wage increase the state has ever enacted. Moreover, an hourly wage of \$24 would place us well above our New England peers, further encroaching in our ability to remain competitive with respect to pricing from our neighbors, most significantly nearby Massachusetts (\$15 per hour) and Connecticut (\$16.94).

We can all agree that hardworking Rhode Islander deserve fair pay and we believe the Legislature achieved that end when it just recently established a \$16 per hour wage. But we caution that wage increases can have unintended consequences, such as those noted above. We hope this committee will strike an equitable balance on the hourly wage increase issue by preserving job opportunities and supporting the businesses that create those jobs.

Thank you for considering the perspective of the Rhode Island Retail Federation.

Sincerely,



Laurie White

President, Rhode Island Retail Federation and the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce