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March 18, 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 is writing to express opposition to H.7769, H.7770, and H.7771, Acts Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Minimum Wage. These bills override current law by further increasing the minimum wage to even higher levels. In May of 2021, the legislature passed a budget article increasing the minimum wage from \$11.50 in 2020, to \$12.25 effective January 1, 2022; \$13.00 effective January 1, 2023; \$14.00 effective January 1, 2024 and \$15.00 effective January 1, 2025. The legislature then passed another bill in 2025 to further increase the minimum wage to \$16.00 January 1, 2026, and to \$17.00 January 1, 2027. Between 2020 and 2026, Rhode Island businesses experienced a 47.8% increase in minimum wage labor costs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics calculates the cost of living increase to be 26% over the same period. For many businesses, labor is the highest operational cost, so an increase in wage is often difficult.

H.7769 seeks to raise the minimum wage to \$20.00 per hour January 1, 2027. H.7771 proposes to raise the minimum wage in 2027 to \$24.00 an hour. H.7770 provides a two-year pause followed by an annual increase calculated using the consumer price index for the northeast region.

When wages increase, there are other costs that are directly impacted by the increase. For example, if the minimum wage is increased, the unemployment insurance premium goes up, worker's compensation insurance premiums go up, FICA payments increase. Prior to the pandemic, Rhode Island's unemployment trust fund had just over \$500 million in it. Employers were paying premiums based upon schedule "F" (the schedule starts at "A" and goes up with each schedule resulting in a higher tax rate). A rate decrease was anticipated by most. We all know what happened during the pandemic as businesses were forced to close their doors and employees began collecting



unemployment. Fraud occurred as well. The unemployment rate schedule was raised to “H.” Today, employers are, once again, paying unemployment premiums based on schedule “F” thanks to the General Assembly placing some ARPA money into the fund. While that is good news, we still have not achieved the rate reduction anticipated pre-pandemic. According to the Tax Foundation’s 2026 report, Rhode Island ranks 48<sup>th</sup> out of 50 for unemployment insurance tax liability, 50 being the highest liability.<sup>1</sup>

Also, Rhode Island remains the only state in the country that requires employers to pay premium pay to employees who work Sunday and holidays as part of their normal forty (40) hour work week. For these employers, an increase in the minimum wage rate is an even greater hardship. These additional costs of doing business are not considered as part of these proposals and are simply increases that most businesses, especially our small businesses, cannot absorb without directly impacting their ability to remain open or to expand and grow.

**The Chamber encourages this committee oppose the passage of H.7769, H.7770 and H.7771**

Respectfully,

Monika P. Zuluaga  
President & CEO

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<sup>1</sup> Tax Foundation, 2026 State Competitiveness Index  
<https://taxfoundation.org/statetaxindex/states/rhode-island/>