

March 29, 2026

To: RI House Labor Committee
From: White Electric Coffee Co-op
Re: Support of House Bill 7964

To Chair Arthur Corvese and members of the House Labor Committee,

I'm writing on behalf of White Electric Coffee Co-op in support of HB 7964, the Rhode Island Opportunity for Employee Ownership Act. White Electric Coffee is a long-established coffee shop in Providence that 5 years ago was purchased by employees and reopened as a worker-owned cooperative. Being a business where everyone is a worker-owner helps establish a rewarding and sustainable work environment. Though there are daily challenges (as anyone who has ever run a business knows), we are grateful to have a foundation where co-workers are collectively invested, where responsibilities and benefits are shared, and where our ideas are incorporated into collaborative decision-making.

In the five years since our business has been a worker cooperative, we've heard overwhelmingly positive feedback from customers, as well as a lot of curiosity, since there is still a lack of awareness about this type of business ownership structure. The strength of this bill is that it would provide opportunities from several angles. Firstly, as business owners are looking to sell or retire, they can consider current employees as a viable option to continue on their business legacy. For employees turned worker-owners, this can be an opportunity to grow skills, experience greater responsibility and investment, and help secure longer term employment. For our communities, we can make sure our beloved businesses have a path forward and keep our local economy thriving with its unique character. And lastly, the Opportunity for Employee Ownership Act would help serve as a general educational tool, so that more people could learn about options and methods for worker-owned businesses.

When we went through the process of becoming a worker cooperative five years ago, there were many details we had to figure out on our own, and though we made it, it certainly wasn't easy! Since then, we've been happy to pass on advice and point others toward local and national resources, so we've seen and experienced firsthand how Rhode Island could greatly benefit from a "one-stop shop" list of relevant business resources, as this bill would enable.

We hope to see the Opportunity for Employee Ownership Act move forward, as a step toward a broader growth in worker-ownership in Rhode Island, and as a way to help save and strengthen our small business economy.

Please reach out with any further questions, thank you for your consideration.

Chloe Chassaing
co-worker / co-owner
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