



Mar 30, 2026

**House Labor Committee**

State of Rhode Island General Assembly

82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

[houselabor@rilegislature.gov](mailto:houselabor@rilegislature.gov)

**Subject:** Support for the Opportunity for Employee Ownership Act (HB 7964 / SB 2744)

Dear Members of the House Labor Committee,

I am writing on behalf of CoEverything, a worker owned architecture and real estate development cooperative, to express my strong support for the Opportunity for Employee Ownership Act (HB 7964 / SB 2744).

This legislation represents a meaningful step towards strengthening Rhode Island's small business ecosystem while empowering workers and preserving the character of our local economy. By increasing awareness of employee ownership as a viable business transition strategy, the Act ensures that business owners and employees alike are informed about options that are often overlooked.

A particularly important component of this bill is the provision requiring a 30-day notice and opportunity for employees of small businesses to explore cooperative ownership when a sale or transition is imminent. This window creates a fair chance for employees—who already understand the business—to step forward collectively and maintain continuity.

In addition, establishing a centralized, statewide list of technical assistance resources, including information on available state and federal tax incentives, will provide critical support for those navigating what can otherwise be a complex process. Access to these resources can make the difference between a business closing or remaining a vibrant part of the community.

Ultimately, this Act helps preserve the legacy of locally owned businesses, keeps wealth rooted in our communities, and fosters a more resilient and inclusive economy across Rhode Island.

I respectfully urge you to support HB 7964 / SB 2744 and help advance a policy that benefits workers, business owners, and the broader community.

Sincerely,

**Haley Hardwick-Witman**

Co-Owner+Architect

**Co-Everything LLC**