



March 30, 2026

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese, Chairman
House Labor Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H.7966, An Act Relating to Health and Safety – The Extreme Temperature Workforce Protection Act

Dear Chairman Corvese,

The undersigned members of the Rhode Island Business Coalition oppose the passage of H.7966, An Act Relating to Health and Safety – The Extreme Temperature Workforce Protection Act. This legislation would establish numerous requirements of employers given certain weather-related situations.

H.7966 requires employers to take special precautions when employees are working in temperatures above 90 degrees or below 32 degrees, including employees that are required to stay in vehicles under these conditions.

All employers would be required to develop and implement a written worksite temperature-related injury and illness prevention plan which would need to be updated at least annually. In addition, an employer with ten or more employees must designate one or more safety coordinators to implement and monitor the plan.

Employers must also provide drinking water in “sufficient quantity so that a minimum of thirty-two ounces of drinking water per hour is available per employee”. We are not sure how this is going to be monitored and if the quantity doesn’t meet the ratio required, employers are subject to fines.

The legislation also institutes a requirement that employees who are new or returning to work that might fall into the provisions of this chapter be provided time to acclimate to the environment. Such employees’ work schedule would be only 20% of their regular work for the first day and then gradually increase work over a two-week period. Another issue this raises is how employers are going to schedule work to finish jobs in time and who defines gradually.

The legislation also sets standards for the temperature controls of vehicles provided for employees in temperature-related work situations. In addition, the bill requires employers to provide employees gloves, hats and other clothing to protect against temperature-related work settings. Any violations of these requirements or any other required by this chapter is subject to potential action by the Attorney General.

The Rhode Island Business Coalition represents 50 industries and 6,280 businesses that employ 231,200 people throughout Rhode Island.

Rhode Island employers are currently subject to rules adopted by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA). These rules require every employer in general industry to conduct a hazard assessment to determine the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment to be used to protect workers from the hazards including extreme heat.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has published criteria for a recommended standard for occupational heat stress. The NIOSH document includes recommendations for employers about how to prevent heat-related illnesses.¹

Finally, the courts have interpreted OSHA's general duty clause to mean that an employer has a legal obligation to provide a workplace free of conditions or activities that either the employer or industry recognizes as hazardous and that cause, or are likely to cause, death or serious physical harm to employees when there is a feasible method to abate the hazard.²

For these reasons, the Coalition members urge this committee to reject the passage of H.7966.

Sincerely,

David Chenevert, Chairman, Rhode Island Business Coalition

East Greenwich Chamber of Commerce

Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce

National Federation of Independent Business

Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce

Propane Gas Association of New England

Rhode Island Builders Association

Rhode Island Hospitality Association

Rhode Island Lumber and Building Materials Dealers Association

Rhode Island Marine Trades Association

Rhode Island Small Business Economic Summit Regulations Subcommittee

Rhode Island Small Business Economic Summit Tax and Budget Committee

Rhode Island Staffing Association

cc. House Labor Committee members

¹ FEBRUARY 2016 DHHS (NIOSH) PUBLICATION NUMBER 2016-106

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2016-106/pdfs/2016-106.pdf?id=10.26616/NIOSH PUB2016106>

² Occupational Safety and Health Administration Employer Responsibilities <https://www.osha.gov/heat-exposure/standards>