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March 30, 2026

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

Dear Chairman Corvese and Members of the Committee,

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. I write to express the Chamber's opposition to both H.7966, An Act Relating to Health and Safety – The Extreme Temperature Workforce Protection Act and H.8311, An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Division of Occupational Health.

While we share the goal of ensuring safe working conditions for all employees, H.7966 and H.8311 would impose a series of rigid and burdensome requirements on employers that may prove difficult to implement in practice and could significantly disrupt business operations.

Both pieces of legislation mandate that employers take specific actions when employees are working in temperatures above 90 degrees or below 32 degrees, including those working in vehicles. H.7966 requires all employers to develop and annually update a comprehensive written temperature-related injury and illness prevention plan. Employers with ten or more employees must also designate one or more safety coordinators to oversee and enforce these plans, adding additional administrative and personnel burdens.

H.7966's requirement that employers provide a minimum of thirty-two ounces of drinking water per hour per employee raises practical concerns regarding monitoring, compliance, and potential penalties. Similarly, the mandated acclimatization schedule for new or returning employees—beginning at 20 percent of normal workload and gradually increasing over a two-week period—lacks clarity and flexibility, making it difficult for employers to meet operational demands and project deadlines.

An important note for both H.7966 and H.8311: Rhode Island employers are already subject to comprehensive federal standards under the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA). These regulations require employers to assess workplace hazards and implement appropriate protective measures, including those related to extreme temperatures. Guidance from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) further provides well-



established recommendations for preventing heat-related illness. Courts have also consistently interpreted OSHA's general duty clause to require employers to maintain workplaces free from recognized hazards.

Given the existing regulatory framework, H.7966 and H.8311 would create duplicative and potentially conflicting requirements, increasing compliance complexity without clear evidence of improved outcomes.

For these reasons, the Chamber respectfully urges the Committee to reject H.7966 and H.8311.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Monika Zuluaga".

Monika P. Zuluaga
President & CEO