



March 30, 2026

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

OPPOSE H 8331 – Trades Worker Justice and Safety Act

Dear Chairman Corvese and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, I write in opposition to H 8331.

The Chamber and our members strongly support safe, respectful, and inclusive workplaces across all industries, including construction. The goals outlined in this legislation—preventing harassment, protecting workers, and ensuring dignity on job sites—are important and widely shared values. However, H 8331, as drafted, takes an approach that is operationally burdensome and likely to have significant unintended consequences for Rhode Island’s construction industry and broader economy.

This legislation creates an expansive and duplicative regulatory framework that overlays existing federal and state workplace protections, including OSHA standards and anti-discrimination laws, with a new and highly complex compliance regime. It mandates detailed operational requirements—ranging from facility specifications and inspection schedules to reporting protocols and training mandates—that would be difficult to implement consistently across projects of varying size, scope, and duration.

Of particular concern is the creation of a new, independent ombudsman office with broad investigative and enforcement authority, including the ability to issue binding corrective actions and conduct unannounced inspections. This represents a significant expansion of government oversight that risks creating confusion, duplicative enforcement, and inconsistent standards across agencies already tasked with workplace regulation.

The bill also establishes substantial penalties, including fines up to \$50,000 per violation, stop-work orders, and potential suspension from eligibility for public contracts. These provisions introduce a high level of financial and operational risk for contractors and developers, particularly in an environment where projects are already challenged by rising costs, workforce shortages, and tight financing conditions.

Taken together, these requirements will increase project costs, extend timelines, and inject uncertainty into the development process. At a time when Rhode Island is working to encourage investment, expand housing production, and support economic growth, this legislation moves in the opposite direction. Developers, contractors, and funders closely evaluate regulatory environments, and measures like H 8331 risk discouraging participation in Rhode Island projects or delaying those currently in the pipeline.

Importantly, responsible employers and contractors already implement robust workplace safety, anti-harassment, and training programs. A more effective approach would be to build on existing frameworks, support enforcement of current laws, and work collaboratively with industry stakeholders to address gaps—rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all mandate with sweeping new requirements and penalties.

For these reasons, the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce respectfully urges the Committee to oppose H 8331. We remain committed to working with policymakers, labor, and industry partners to advance policies that both protect workers and support a strong, competitive economic environment in Rhode Island.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized, continuous line that starts with a horizontal stroke, dips down, and then extends horizontally to the right.

Laurie White  
President  
Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce