



Director's Office

One Capitol Hill | Providence, RI 02908 | (401) 222-2280

April 21, 2026

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese
Chairperson
House Committee on Labor
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill No. 7042 -- An Act Relating To Labor And Labor Relations -- Labor Relations Act

Dear Chairperson Corvese:

Thank you for providing the Division of Human Resources (the "Division") within the Department of Administration (the "Department") the opportunity to submit our feedback in response to House Bill No. 7042, which proposes new amendments to the Labor Relations Act that would provide for the right to strike for public sector workers in Rhode Island, including teachers, with exceptions for police officers, firefighters, 9-1-1 employees, and correctional officers.

The collective bargaining agreements (CBA) between the State of Rhode Island and various labor unions include provisions for no strikes or lockouts. While the Department's interpretation of this bill is that it does not apply to or impact state employees, the Division is concerned that some of the language in the legislation may create ambiguity with respect to state employees' rights in the law if passed.

Section 1 of the bill deletes the strike prohibition that currently exists for employees of health care providers, including hospital and nursing homes, that is codified in the State Labor Relations Act. Without providing more clarity and further defining the term "health care provider," this could call into question the strike rights of State employees who work at Eleanor Slater Hospital, the Rhode Island State Psychiatric Hospital, Rhode Island Veterans Home, Department of Corrections infirmaries, and health clinics at the state colleges.

Further, Section 4 of the bill calls into question the strike prohibition that currently applies to all State employees. The language could provide room for additional interpretation, making it unclear whether state employees -- except for firefighters, correctional officers, 9-1-1 employees and police officers -- have the right to strike.

State services impact almost every aspect of daily life for Rhode Islanders, including administering benefits that feed families, maintaining public health and safety, facilitating travel and commerce, providing workforce training, and so much more. The dedicated public servants in the employ of the State serve not only the most vulnerable populations, but their actions touch the lives of almost every resident.



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If state personnel were to strike, the lives of Rhode Island residents could be significantly disrupted in immediate and practical ways. Unlike private-sector services, many core state functions have no alternative provider. There is no alternative choice for residents seeking a driver's license, filing the necessary forms to open a small business, or accessing employment services should state agencies be forced to close due to a strike. These disruptions would have immediate and tangible consequences for Rhode Island taxpayers.

The Division appreciates the opportunity to share its feedback with the Committee. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact my office at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer L. Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "W".

Jennifer L. Wilson
Executive Director
Division of Human Resources

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Labor
The Honorable David A. Bennett
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
James DeCastro, Committee Clerk