



Rhode Island Health Care Association

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Opposition to H 7291 Rhode Island Health Care Association (RIHCA)

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The Rhode Island Health Care Association (RIHCA), representing the vast majority of the state's nursing facilities and the thousands of Rhode Islanders they employ, respectfully opposes H 7291.

Let us be clear: our members respect the rights of employees to organize, to engage in collective bargaining, and to make their own informed decisions about representation. That is not at issue. What is at issue is whether this legislation preserves a fair, balanced, and transparent process for employees, employers, and the public. H 7291 does not.

First, the bill replaces a longstanding, democratic process with a system that eliminates the secret ballot election in many cases. By allowing union certification based solely on signed authorization cards from a bare majority of employees, H 7291 removes a critical safeguard that ensures workers can make decisions free from pressure, coercion, or undue influence. Secret ballot elections are the gold standard of democratic decision-making. Removing that protection undermines employee choice rather than strengthening it.

Second, the bill imposes sweeping restrictions on employers while granting expanded access and advantages to labor organizations. It requires employers to remain strictly neutral—effectively silencing them—while simultaneously granting unions unprecedented access to employees, including mandatory in-person meetings during onboarding where management is prohibited from being present. This creates an inherently unbalanced environment in which only one perspective may be presented to new employees at a critical moment.

Third, H 7291 mandates the broad disclosure of highly sensitive employee information, including personal contact details and demographic data such as race and ethnicity. While the bill includes confidentiality language, it does not eliminate the real risks associated with sharing such data. Health care employers have a profound responsibility to protect their workforce's privacy. This requirement raises serious concerns about data security, employee consent, and the potential misuse of personal information.

Fourth, the bill creates new administrative burdens that will divert already strained health care resources away from patient care. Nursing facilities across Rhode Island are operating in an environment defined by workforce shortages, rising costs, and increasing regulatory demands. Requiring frequent data reporting, new hire notifications within compressed timelines, and coordination of mandatory union access will further strain limited administrative capacity—without improving care quality or workforce stability.

“Setting the Pace in Nursing Home Care”

A non-profit organization of proprietary and non-proprietary long term health care facilities dedicated to improving health care of the convalescent and chronically ill of all ages. An equal opportunity employer.


Finally, the provision allowing unions to charge non-members for grievance or arbitration services introduces additional complexity and potential conflict within the workplace. Rather than fostering collaboration, this risks creating divisions among employees and undermining workplace cohesion at a time when teamwork is essential to delivering high-quality care.

At its core, H 7291 does not create balance—it tilts the playing field. It diminishes employee protections by eliminating secret ballot elections, restricts employers' ability to communicate, exposes sensitive employee data, and adds operational burdens to a health care system already under significant stress.

RIHCA urges the General Assembly to reject H 7291 and instead pursue policies that support workforce stability, protect employee privacy, and maintain fair and transparent processes for all parties involved.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



John E. Gage, MBA, NHA
President & CEO
Rhode Island Health Care Association