



April 13, 2026

The Honorable Members of the Rhode Island House of Representatives State House 82 Smith Street Providence, RI 02903

Re: Formal Opposition to House Bill H7291

Dear Speaker and Honorable Members of the House,

I, Steven J Benfeito and New England Drywall CO., Inc are members of the Associated Builders and Contractors of Rhode Island (ABC RI), and I am respectfully submitting this letter in formal opposition to House Bill H7291.

ABC RI represents a broad cross-section of merit shop contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers who are committed to fair and open competition, workforce development, and the continued growth of Rhode Island's construction industry. While we support policies that protect workers and promote fair labor practices, we have significant concerns that H7291, as currently drafted, will have unintended negative consequences for both employees and employers across our state.

H7291 proposes to amend the state's labor relations framework by allowing collective bargaining representatives to be certified through a card-signing process in lieu of a secret-ballot election. The removal of the secret-ballot election raises serious concerns regarding employee privacy and the potential for undue influence during the organizing process. Secret-ballot elections have long served as a fundamental safeguard to ensure that workers are able to make independent decisions regarding representation.

Additionally, the bill places restrictions on employer communication by requiring neutrality during organizing efforts. While intended to create balance, this provision may limit an employer's ability to provide employees with important information necessary to make informed decisions. A fair process should allow for transparency and open communication from all parties.

From an economic and workforce perspective, the timing of this legislation is particularly concerning. Rhode Island's construction industry employs approximately 22,000 workers and continues to face significant workforce challenges, including an aging labor pool and a shortage of skilled workers entering the trades. At the same time, broader labor market indicators show that the state's unemployment rate has risen above the national average and labor force participation continues to lag behind regional peers.



Small businesses—representing the overwhelming majority of employers in Rhode Island—would be especially impacted by the additional administrative and compliance requirements included in H7291. Increased obligations related to employee data sharing, dues processing, and representation procedures will create added burdens that many small and mid-sized employers are not equipped to absorb without increased costs.

Collectively, these factors raise concerns about the bill's potential impact on Rhode Island's economic competitiveness. Policies that introduce uncertainty, increase operational costs, or restrict flexibility in workforce management risk discouraging investment and slowing economic growth at a time when the state should be focused on expansion and opportunity.

For these reasons, we, the members of the ABC of Rhode Island respectfully urge the House of Representatives to oppose House Bill H7291. We collectively remain committed to working collaboratively with policymakers on a balanced approaches that support both workers and employers to strengthening Rhode Island's economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss our concerns further.

Sincerely,

Steven J Benfeito, President

New England Drywall Co., Inc.
Member of the Associated Builders and Contractors of Rhode Island