



Director's Office

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

Thomas A. Verdi, Acting Director

April 15, 2026

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

Re: 2026 H 8331 – AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS – THE TRADES WORKER JUSTICE AND SAFETY ACT

Dear Chairperson Corvese,

Thank you for providing the Division of Human Resources ("Division") within the Department of Administration the opportunity to submit comments on House Bill No. 8331, which proposes amendments to labor relations law relating to workplace safety.

The Division supports efforts that help protect employees and ensure a safe and healthy work environment. However, many of the issues contemplated in the proposed legislation are already addressed through existing legal and contractual protections available to State employees. State employees may file claims to address hostile work environments, discrimination, abuse, bullying and intimidation, and retaliation.

In addition, the R.I. Fair Employment Practices Act and other applicable state and federal laws – including the Rhode Island Whistleblower Protection Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act— prohibit discrimination, intimidation, and coercion. Union contracts also contain express protections against "discrimination, intimidation, or coercion" with grievance and arbitration provisions available to address violations.

The proposed legislation would also establish additional protections specific to construction sites, affording additional protections to a specific segment of the state workforce. Existing state law already provides avenues for any state employee who believes they are being subjected to physical or psychological harm to avail themselves of significant protections and remedies.

Finally, the bill proposes an Ombudsman under the Department of Labor & Training to manage the program and to report annually on statewide patterns of job hostility. Violators will be subject to fines of \$5,000 to \$50,000 dollars per violation. However, the legislation does not include a defined implementation plan, budget, or staffing model to support these responsibilities. Without sufficient structure and resources, the State may face challenges in



Director's Office

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

Thomas A. Verdi, Acting Director

effectively administering the program across numerous worksites, creating potential operational and liability concerns.

The Division appreciates the opportunity to share our concerns over this legislation with the Committee. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact my office at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer L. Wilson".

Jennifer L. Wilson
Executive Director, Division of Human Resources

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