

To: The Honorable Members of the RI House of Representatives Committee on Labor

From: Susannah Holloway, writing as an individual, Barrington, RI 02806

4/15/2026

Dear Members of the House Committee on Labor,

Please accept this written testimony from me in support of H 8331 to help establish safe construction worksites in RI for all workers in RI.

This bill is very important. Safety of all our workers is crucial for our community. My mother was a working member of the Service Employees International Union in Rhode Island for many years and she always told me that one reason it is so important to have unions is to help ensure worker safety. The union is able to point out and bring to management's attention any safety defects on a worksite so that the worker doesn't risk getting fired for speaking up. You would think this never would happen, but it does. But it is equally crucial to have safety laws such as H 8331 to reinforce and back up the work the unions and employees do. When I moved to North Carolina, we had a horrific fire at a chicken plant in 1991 in the town of Hamlet, N.C. It was horrific and a preventable tragedy. So many chicken plant processors died that day because many of the exits had been chained and locked shut preventing the workers' escape when the fire broke out and they were trapped inside the burning building and left to die. They were not unionized at that chicken plant in North Carolina which is "a right to work state." 25 workers died that day in Hamlet, 18 women and 7 men.

We need unions and we need laws like H 8831 to back up and support the work union members do to protect safety on the worksite. Important components of H 8331 are having both a neutral ombudsman in authority to take safety reports as well as the whistleblower protections.

Please vote in support of H 8331.

Thank you for your consideration.

~Susannah Holloway, Barrington, RI 02806