



Director's Office

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

May 21, 2026

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese
Chair
House Committee on Labor
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill No. 8505 – An Act Related to Labor and Labor Relations – Workplace Psychological Safety Act

Dear Chairperson Corvese,

Thank you for providing the Division of Human Resources (“Division”) within the Department of Administration (“Department”) the opportunity to submit our concerns in response to House Bill No. 8505, which would provide certain protections for employees from workplace psychological abuse and bullying.

The Division is always in support of measures that help protect employees and ensure a safe and healthy workplace environment. Currently, there are many protections and avenues afforded to State employees to address the issues contemplated in the proposed legislation. State employees may file claims for psychological injuries caused by stress under the R.I. Worker’s Compensation Act.

In addition, the R.I. Fair Employment Practices Act, which covers State employees, prohibits employment discrimination. Union contracts may also contain express protections against “discrimination, intimidation, or coercion” and members may seek redress for these violations through the contracts’ grievance and arbitration provisions.

Protection against retaliation is not unique to the proposed legislation. Several state (RI Fair Employment Practices Act; RI Whistleblower Protection Act) and federal (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act; and the Americans with Disabilities Act) laws expressly prohibit retaliation against anyone who opposes unlawful employment practices or who supports someone who opposes such violations.

This proposed legislation does not provide any new or additional protections for State employees. The State has already completed the required internal support steps, such as development of appropriate policies, staff training and establishment of complaint-investigation procedures. Every State employee who believes and/or claims that they are subjected to the



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psychological harm addressed by the proposed legislation can avail themselves of significant protections and remedies under existing legal authority.

Finally, the legislation deems certain ambiguous and subjective conduct, such as "unreasonable workloads," "consistent micromanagement," and "impossible deadlines," as workplace bullying. The Division is concerned that these terms such as these are overly broad and not clearly defined. If an employer is subject to the payment of compensatory and punitive damages, penalties, and attorney's fees, we respectfully feel there needs to be clear definitions of precisely what constitutes said actions.

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 blue ink that reads "Jennifer L. Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jennifer L. Wilson
Executive Director
Division of Human Resources

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Labor
The Honorable John Joseph Lombardi
Danica Iacoi, Chief of Staff and Special Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel
James DeCastro, Committee Clerk