



Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee
Chairwoman, House Committee on Small Business
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

February 8, 2023

RE: Testimony on H.5264, An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – Zoning Ordinances

Chairwoman McEntee and Committee Members,

The undersigned members of the Rhode Island Business Coalition wish to register our support for H.5264, An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – Zoning Ordinances. This bill prevents municipalities and the state from passing laws to prevent outdoor dining provided the business complies with accessibility requirements established under law.

During the COVID 19 emergency the State created a funding program to help restaurants purchase equipment to allow for outside dining. Items like igloos with heaters, outdoor tables and space heaters became a welcome site as diners were able to eat at a restaurant, while maintaining a sense of security from the virus. According to Commerce RI, The Take it Outside Program awarded \$4.8 million to eligible applicants. For these businesses, and their employees, this program was a life-line.

President Biden has announced that he plans to end the emergency designation in May. If H.5264 is not enacted, communities could reinstate restrictions barring restaurants from using the very equipment purchased, wasting millions in previously invested state funds and giving the dining public fewer options.

The Coalition urges the committee to support the passage of H.5264. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Associated Builders and Contractors of Rhode Island

Energy Marketers Association Rhode Island

Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce

Ivy Wealth Management

National Federation of Independent Business

North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce

Rhode Island Beverage Association

Rhode Island Business Group on Health

Rhode Island Hospitality Association

Rhode Island Manufacturers Association

Rhode Island Small Business Economic Summit Regulations Committee

Rhode Island Small Business Economic Summit Tax and Budget Committee

Rhode Island Society of Certified Public Accountants