



May 11, 2026

Chairperson and Members of the Senate Labor & Gaming Committee

Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Opposition to Senate Bill S 2170

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

As the President of New England Drywall Co., Inc., I respectfully submit this letter in opposition to Senate Bill S 2170, legislation that would allow unemployment benefits for workers engaged in strikes or labor disputes.

As a member of the Associated Builders and Contractors of Rhode Island (ABC RI), represents the merit shop contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, and construction professionals throughout Rhode Island who are committed to fair and open competition, workforce development, and responsible economic growth. We believe S 2170 would create unintended consequences that could negatively impact employers, employees, taxpayers, and the overall business climate in Rhode Island.

The unemployment insurance system was established to provide temporary financial assistance to individuals who lose employment through no fault of their own. Expanding unemployment benefits to individuals voluntarily participating in a strike fundamentally changes the purpose of the unemployment insurance program and places additional financial burdens on the system and on employers who fund it.

This legislation would effectively require employers to subsidize labor disputes against themselves through increased unemployment insurance costs and higher employer contribution rates. At a time when Rhode Island businesses continue to face rising operating costs, workforce shortages, inflationary pressures, and economic uncertainty, S 2170 sends the wrong message to employers considering investment and job creation in our state.

Additionally, this proposal risks prolonging labor disputes by reducing incentives for timely resolution between parties. Rhode Island should instead focus on policies that encourage collaboration, economic competitiveness, and workforce stability rather than policies that may increase workplace conflict and financial strain on employers.



ABC RI strongly supports protecting workers' rights and promoting fair labor practices. However, unemployment insurance should remain focused on assisting individuals who are involuntarily unemployed, not as a funding mechanism during labor disputes.

For these reasons, New England Drywall Co., Inc. respectfully urges the committee to oppose Senate Bill S 2170.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our concerns. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven J Benfeito

President

New England Drywall, Co., Inc