



Member Focused; Results Driven

March 24, 2026

Oppose

The Honorable Robert Britto
Chair: Senate Commerce Committee
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
The State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Senate Bill 2342: Self-Checkout Limitations

Dear Honorable Chair:

My name is Scott Bromberg, and I am the President & CEO of the Rhode Island Food Dealers Association, a trade association established in 1909 to serve the needs of the grocery industry in the State of Rhode Island. Our membership includes chain and independent grocery retailers, wholesalers, suppliers, distributors, food manufacturers, brokers, and other organizations affiliated with the food industry in our state. As an industry, we are among the state's largest employers and revenue generators.

On behalf of our association members, I would like to take this opportunity to register our group's opposition to the self-checkout limitations proposed in Senate Bill 2342. This proposal is especially egregious because it **specifically targets only grocery stores**. Big box retailers, along with hardware stores, pharmacies, dollar stores, fast food chains and more utilize self-checkout to allow them to deploy their staff where needed most. The issues surrounding self-checkout are not unique to grocery stores and this bill implies that self-checkout concerns only happen at grocery retailers. This puts Rhode Island grocers at a **significant competitive disadvantage**. Grocery sales are not limited to traditional grocery outlets anymore. Big Box retailers represent 5-10% of grocery sales in Rhode Island; pharmacies are always expanding their grocery offerings and many of them can be found in the same plaza as a traditional grocer. These other brick-and-mortar businesses will all be allowed to use unrestricted self-checkout terminals, but not the markets.

Many customers prefer the convenience provided by self-checkout stations that allow them to save time. This has been researched and studied by our membership. It should remain the choice of the customer to use self-checkout. According to a study by Progressive Grocer, 44% of US grocery shoppers prefer to pay via self-checkout and 77% believe it is faster. This should remain a consumer's choice to utilize self-checkout. There are always traditional register lanes available.

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Since COVID, online grocery shopping has skyrocketed and now represents an estimated 17-19% of all grocery sales and 60% of US households ordered groceries online in 2025. Grocers have created new in-store departments to handle the increase in curbside pickups, picking online orders, staging online orders, and direct-to-home delivery. Self-checkout machines are not new technology and have been used in traditional grocery stores for over three decades. **In-store staffing has, in fact, not declined due to self-checkout.** There is no data suggesting that this is the case.

Requiring a store to have one cashier **and** one supervisor for every 2 self-checkout terminals, severely limits our members' ability to properly utilize their staff as needed. Stores will need to pull employees from the deli, bakery, floral and/or stocking to watch self-checkout. This could lead to shelves not being stocked, delays in dealing with in-store situations that require immediate attention, online orders being delayed, and not being able to cater to the time-sensitive needs of the customer in the moment.

Like many industries, grocery stores are having a difficult time finding employees. It is especially important for grocers to have flexibility in using their resources where and when they are needed at times when it is difficult to both find and retain employees.

Is it the responsibility of the state to determine how, when, and where a business deploys its staff? Are these issues that can be collectively bargained where appropriate?

The only self-checkout restriction that has passed anywhere in the country is in a municipality in California. Although the state of California is considering a bill, it is much less restrictive and much less burdensome than Senate Bill 2342. **This exact proposal was considered by the Massachusetts Legislature last year but has not passed.** Rhode Island would be the only state to impose such stringent restrictions on its local businesses if Senate Bill 2342 passes.

Self-checkout terminals are an innovation designed to help brick-and-mortar retailers operate efficiently and effectively in a time of increasing online shopping and increasingly competitive marketplace, and dramatically elevated costs for both operators and consumers. By limiting self-checkouts at only grocery stores, costs will only continue to rise for Rhode Island consumers. In a state that seeks innovation and wants to attract new businesses, why are we limiting innovative technology that helps both small and larger businesses operate?

This bill while labeled as a restriction on self-checkout is in fact a ban on self-checkout. There is no way a grocery retailer would be able to keep self-checkout with these restrictions.

In summary, Rhode Island's food industry is one of the largest – and steadiest – employers in the state. This proposed bill would have a negative impact on our members as it would make it much more difficult to manage and operate their business effectively and efficiently in Rhode Island. This bill is a significant step back for Rhode Island business operators. We ask you to recognize their position when considering Senate Bill 2342.

Thank you for allowing our industry to weigh in on this bill.

Sincerely,



Scott Bromberg
President & CEO
RI Food Dealers Association

CC: Hon. Valerie J. Lawson, President
Rhode Island State Senate

Hon. Frank A. Ciccone, III, Majority Leader
Rhode Island State Senate

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