



# State of Rhode Island COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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## TESTIMONY

BILL NO.: 2026 S 2320  
BILL TITLE: An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Division of Occupational Health  
PRIMARY SPONSOR: Senator DiPalma  
COMMITTEE: Senate Labor & Gaming  
DATE: March 4, 2026

The Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (“Commission”) **requests an amendment** to this bill.

The Commission is the state’s primary antidiscrimination law enforcement agency charged with investigating allegations of discrimination based on categories such as race, sex, disability and age in employment, housing, public accommodations and credit.

S 2320 provides for employee protections from extreme temperatures. It defines extreme temperatures, outlines minimum protections for employees, and delineates employers’ responsibilities for providing those protections. **This bill gives enforcement authority to two different agencies – the department of health and the Commission.** § 23-1.1-18(e) provides that the department of health may promulgate regulations to implement and administer the provisions of this bill. § 23-1.1-18(d) provides that the employee protections against non-compliance, or adverse treatment when they report violations, are under the provisions of § 28-5-7 which is enforced by the Commission.

While the Commission supports the bill’s goal, the Commission and its investigators’ expertise is in investigating charges of unfair practices based on protected categories, not in workplace health and safety violations. Therefore, the Commission requests the bill be amended to delete references to § 28-5-7 and to have the bill’s protections enforced in the same manner as other workplace safety violations covered by Chapter 23-1.1.

**Commission contact: Commissioner Cynthia Hiatt, 222-7563**