



February 27, 2024

Honorable Joseph Solomon
Chairman, House Corporations Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H.7230, An Act Relating to Commercial Law – Grocery Stores

Chairman Solomon and Committee Members,

The undersigned members of the Rhode Island Business Coalition wish to register our opposition to H.7230, An Act Relating to Commercial Law – Grocery Stores. This bill places the following three major requirements on grocery stores and to certain other retail establishments: (1) limits the number of customer self-checkout stations to six; (2) requires grocery stores, and other retail establishments selling grocery items, to maintain one manual check-out station for every self-checkout station in use; and (3) gives the Attorney General the authority to establish undefined penalties for non-compliance. H.7230 raises a fundamental question for the state, “to what length can government dictate the operations of a business, including its ability to automate to become efficient?”

Like many industries today, grocery stores are facing a difficult time finding and retaining employees. The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training November 2023 Market report revealed an unemployment rate of 2.9%. The low unemployment rate combined with the high cost of labor will require businesses to develop alternative models to serve their customers or cease from operating. This bill says to the business community, “the state is going to tell you how to run your business or leave.”

Grocery and retail stores are a crucial part of the economy. These entities provide opportunities for residents and businesses to purchase needed products. Many customers prefer the convenience provided by self-checkout stations that allow them to save time.

We urge the committee to oppose this legislation and to not create policies that discourage and penalize businesses from operating while curtailing consumer choices.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Associated Builders and Contractors, Rhode Island

East Greenwich Chamber of Commerce

Energy Marketers Association Rhode Island

Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce

National Federation of Independent Business

North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce

Rhode Island Beverage Association

Rhode Island Business Group on Health

Rhode Island Manufacturers Association

Rhode Island Small Business Economic Summit Tax and Budget Committee

Rhode Island Staffing Association

Sustainable Benefits Strategies, LLC