

February 4, 2025

Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Chairman, House Corporations Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 5250 - AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS - HOLIDAY
BUSINESS

Dear Chairman Solomon and Honorable Members of the Committee:

As the newly-elected Board Chair of Rhode Island Business Leaders Alliance (the “Alliance”), I am grateful for the opportunity to provide the House Corporations Committee with this written testimony in response to **H 5250 - An Act Relating to Businesses and Professions - Holiday Business**.

The Alliance comprises Rhode Island business leaders, trade associations, and educational institutions who are motivated to improve our state's national business climate rankings and dedicated to taking action to address these challenges. We have come together in an unprecedented alliance with a positive, forward-looking vision for our state: to revitalize Rhode Island's struggling economy and to create broad-based economic growth and opportunity for all Rhode Islanders. Our group is confident we have everything we need to transform Rhode Island into a national model of economic competitiveness.

The Alliance is a partnership with Littler Mendelson, PC (“Littler”), the world's largest labor and employment law practice focused on employers. Littler's Workplace Policy Institute (“WPI”), the nation's most powerful and influential government relations and public policy practice group, has played an instrumental role in the Alliance's strategic direction. We are grateful for their subject matter expertise in areas such as this.

The Alliance fully supports the long-overdue recognition of Juneteenth National Freedom Day as a legal holiday in Rhode Island. The Alliance also supports common sense legislative efforts that make it easier to do business here in Rhode Island. For this reason, the Alliance cannot support H 5250—or any other legislative effort to perpetuate Rhode Island's antiquated, outdated, and anti-competitive Sunday and holiday premium pay laws.

When Massachusetts finally phased out its Sunday and holiday premium pay requirements on January 1, 2023, Rhode Island earned the dubious distinction of becoming the only state in the

country to require most employers to pay premium pay to non-exempt employees for hours worked on legal holidays. We are now a national outlier.

In preparation for submission of this testimony, the Alliance spoke with small retailers throughout the State of Rhode Island. Many of them reported that they choose not to open on legal holidays to avoid the burden and expense of paying time and a half to their non-exempt employees. It is simply too expensive for these businesses to open their doors.

As a small state, Rhode Island faces unique challenges in competing with our neighbors, Connecticut and Massachusetts. We are committed to proactive steps that attract new business development and support the businesses that provide good-paying jobs and drive our economy. To remain competitive, it is essential that we create an environment where businesses choose to grow and invest here, rather than look elsewhere for more favorable conditions. Rhode Island's long-term economic success depends on policies that reflect the needs of a 21st-century economy. A thoughtful review of laws—such as our Sunday and holiday premium pay requirements—can help ensure that we remain competitive with surrounding states and across the country.

The Alliance invites the Honorable Members of this Committee to focus their time and attention on public policies to revitalize the business climate, close skills gaps, address workforce readiness challenges, incentivize job creation, and promote growth in emerging industries and technological innovation. Introducing legislation during the 2025 session to repeal Rhode Island's Sunday and holiday premium pay laws would send a clear and unambiguous message to employers like Hasbro that the General Assembly takes seriously their concerns about the business climate and is prepared to take all necessary and appropriate steps to fix what is broken.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and please feel free to contact me to continue this important conversation.

Sincerely,

Melissa Travis

Melissa Travis
Chairman
Rhode Island Business Leaders Alliance