

**Christopher Bove**

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The Honorable Marvin Abney

Chairman; House Committee on Finance

Rhode Island State House

Providence, RI 02903

Testimony in Opposition of House Bill 7500

June 12, 2024

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to you today to express my unfortunate opposition to House Bill 7500, which would prohibit public smoking at Rhode Island casinos, and provide a one-time allocation of \$1,000,000 of state funds to inform patrons of this change in policy.

While I wholeheartedly support banning public smoking at Rhode Island casinos, I am very concerned about the use of such a significant amount of taxpayer funds to educate the public about this new policy. As you know, the state is currently facing major crises in the areas of housing, healthcare, public transportation, and other critical areas, and with this in mind, I believe it is irresponsible to spend \$1,000,000 on this type of expenditure when there are so many more important programs that could use this sort of financial support from the state. I know RIPTA in particular would greatly benefit from an additional expenditure of this size to support their operations in the coming fiscal year, and I believe that the public would benefit more from additional spending on public transportation than they would funding a \$1,000,000 public awareness campaign on the prohibition of smoking cigarettes in casinos.

While I believe that education on this topic will certainly be needed, I do not believe that such a significant allocation is necessary, and that something like this could easily be addressed using social media campaigns and posted signs and placards throughout the facility. At the end of the

day, I do not think Rhode Island taxpayers should be footing such a large bill to educate a miniscule portion of the population who insist on smoking in public in the first place.

I understand that my comments are coming at the last minute, and that the committee has likely already made up their minds on this issue; however, I was not aware of the financial implications of this legislation before today, and I felt that it was important to share my views on this topic.

I thank you all for your consideration of my comments, and I hope you all enjoy a well-deserved break upon the conclusion of this year's legislative session,

Wishing you all the best,

*Christopher Bove*