



RHODE ISLAND WORKING FAMILIES POWER

Representative Robert Craven, Chair
House Judiciary Committee

Wednesday April 24, 2024

Support for H7054, relating to worker protections

Chair Craven and Members of the Committee,

RI Working Families Power writes to express our support for H-7054 (Rep. Morales), the "Construction Industry Paycheck Recovery Act." This legislation continues the work of safeguarding the livelihoods of RI construction workers, who are pivotal to our economy yet often face financial vulnerability.

The RIGA has taken important strides toward protecting workers in recent years, including by having made wage theft a felony in 2023. Yet too many workers still face challenges in receiving their hard-earned wages promptly and fairly. The nature of the construction industry in particular often leaves these workers susceptible to delayed or unpaid wages due to the complex web of subcontracting. H7054 addresses such issues by holding primary contractors accountable for wage violations that occur anywhere up their subcontracting chain. This approach both incentivizes compliance with wage laws and establishes a fairer playing field for all businesses in the construction industry.

Rhode Island would not be an outlier in passing such legislation; similar protections currently exist in New York state. Most importantly, however, the passage of this bill would send a clear message that Rhode Island values the essential contributions of its workers by actively preventing wage theft and exploitation. It is a direct reflection of our commitment to economic justice and fair labor practices.

In conclusion, RI Working Families Power strongly urges passage of H7054. Let us stand together in support of this crucial legislation and ensure that the construction industry in RI is built on a culture of fairness, dignity, and respect.

Respectfully submitted,

M. Zachary Mezera
RI Political Director
Working Families Power