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Testimony of

Christopher Carlozzi, State Director, National Federation of Independent Business
In Opposition to House Bill No. 7319
Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – healthy and Safe Families Workplace Act
Before the House Committee on Labor
March 5, 2024

Chairman Corvese and Members of the House Committee on Labor:

My name is Christopher Carlozzi. I am the Rhode Island State Director of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB). A non-profit, non-partisan organization, NFIB is the nations and Rhode Island's largest small business advocacy group. In Rhode Island, NFIB represents hundreds of small and independent business owners involved in all types of industry, including manufacturing, retail, wholesale, service, and agriculture. The average NFIB member has five employees and annual gross revenues of about \$450,000. In short, NFIB represents the small Main Street business owners from across the state. On behalf of those small and independent business employers in Rhode Island, I urge you to oppose House Bill No. 7319, requiring a 32-hour workweek, paid at 40 hours for some employers.

While this legislation does not yet impact smaller employers, it sets a bad precedent that could eventually lead to small businesses being subjected to this onerous policy. According to the NFIB Research Foundation's latest Small Business Optimism Index, thirty-nine percent of employers have job openings they cannot fill right now. When asked, twenty-one percent of owners report finding qualified help as their top concern. Help wanted signs have become a common occurrence in virtually every business, in every corner of the state. Mandating that Rhode Island implements a four-day workweek will only exacerbate this problem.

House Bill No. 7319 demands that employers with more than 500 workers schedule workers for 32-hours, pay them for 40 hours, and face additional overtime premium pay. Not only would this be unfeasible because of the existing labor shortages, but the additional labor expenses would be passed along directly to consumers. This policy would make Rhode Island even more unaffordable to do business. Not only would smaller businesses fear they will eventually be subjected to this policy, it would make it more difficult for them to compete with employers that are forced to offer a 32-hour workweek, making it even harder to find workers.

I strongly urge you to reject House Bill No. 7319 regarding a 32-hour workweek. Thank you.