



## Director's Office

One Capitol Hill | Providence, RI 02908 | (401) 222-2280

Jonathan Womer, Director

February 12, 2025

House Committee on Labor  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: H5132 – AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS --  
WORKPLACE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY ACT**

Dear Chairperson Corvese,

Thank you for providing the Division of Human Resources ("Division") within the Department of Administration the opportunity to submit comments in response to House Bill No. 5132, which proposes new amendments to Labor Relations law, specifically relating to workplace safety.

The Division is always in support of measures that help protect employees and ensure a safe and healthy workplace environment. Currently, there are many protections and avenues afforded State employees to address the issues contemplated in the proposed legislation. State employees may file claims for psychological injuries or injuries caused by stress under the R.I. Worker's Compensation Act.

In addition, the R.I. Fair Employment Practices Act, that covers state employees, is the state statute which prohibits employment discrimination, including harassment and hostile work environment. Union contracts also contain express protections against "discrimination, intimidation, or coercion" and members may seek redress for these violations through the contracts' grievance and arbitration provisions.

Protection against retaliation is not unique to the proposed legislation. Several state (RI Fair Employment Practices Act; RI Whistleblower Protection Act) and federal statutes (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act; and the Americans with Disabilities Act) all expressly prohibit retaliation against anyone who opposes unlawful employment practices or who supports someone who opposes such violations.

Every state employee who believes and/or claims that they are subjected to the psychological harm addressed by the proposed legislation can avail themselves of significant protections and remedies under existing legal authority.



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This proposed legislation does not provide any new or additional protections for State employees in that the State has already completed the required internal support steps, such as development of policy, staff training and establishment of complaint-investigation procedures. The proposed legislation's requirements for record-keeping and reporting is burdensome and may not advance the goals of this legislation, as the statistics specified indicate nothing germane to psychological abuse.

Further, the proposed legislation creates elaborate and far-reaching responsibilities for the Department of Labor & Training (DLT) but provides neither substantive guidance for the substantial discretion which DLT will be required to exercise, nor additional resources to support the arduous new duties imposed on that agency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer L. Wilson".

Jennifer L. Wilson  
Executive Director, Division of Human Resources

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Labor  
The Honorable John Joseph Lombardi

Nicole McCarty, Esq. Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House  
James DeCastro, Clerk