



**Champion Advocacy
Associates**

February 12, 2025

The Honorable Arthur Corvese
House Labor Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Corvese and Committee Members:

The Northern RI Chamber of Commerce (NRICC) represents businesses in the communities of Burrillville, Central Falls, Cumberland, Foster, Glocester, Johnston, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Scituate, Smithfield and Woonsocket. The Chamber respectfully opposes the passage of H.5132, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations — Workplace Psychological Safety Act

While well meaning, this legislation would place employers in an extremely difficult position and would result in many lawsuits as well as endless investigations. The definition of "psychological abuse" under this bill includes actions such as "mistreatment that has the effect of hurting, weakening, confusing, or frightening a person mentally or emotionally." These terms are very subjective. They can mean different things to different people, leaving everyone wondering what they can and cannot do or say in the workplace. An employee may use both direct and circumstantial evidence to prove a violation occurred.

The legislation does include an affirmative defense for employers. To qualify the employer must show it took *all steps* contemplated in the statute. Presumably that includes: (1) adopting a policy against psychological abuse and anti-retaliation policies; (2) training all managers, supervisors and "representative employees" as to handling complaints of abusive behavior, (3) Posting employees' rights, (4) Implementing an investigation policy for complaints; (5) Annually filling out the workplace climate survey with OSHA or DLT; (6) Annually reporting the number of employee complaints, disciplines, workers compensation claims, absenteeism rates, stress leave rates, attrition rates, discrimination complaints, investigation rates, follow-up actions; (7) Show employer and representative employees didn't know or *should not have known* about the activities.

In the event an allegation is deemed to fit the definitions outlined in the legislation, that employee is entitled to economic, compensatory, and punitive damages or \$5,000, whichever is

10 Lincoln Drive, North Smithfield RI 02896

tel. (401) 374-0456

fax (401) 597-5977

lenetteforry@gmail.com