

February 11, 2025

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



Subject: House Bill 5305 - Oppose

Dear Chairman Corvese and Honorable Members of the House Labor Committee:

On behalf of the member companies of The Rhode Island Chapter of Associated General Contractors (RIAGC), I write regarding House Bill 5305.

RIAGC member companies are regulated by and subject to health and safety oversight by various federal and state agencies such as the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (RIDLT), and the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH). RIAGC members are required to have rigorous safety programs in place to keep workers safe on all construction job sites at all times and during all seasons.

Rhode Island's construction industry has long been a leader in developing best-of-class safety procedures, training, and protocols to protect workers from job site hazards. The utilization of signage, safety inspections, toolbox talks, fall protection, personal protective equipment (hard hats, safety glasses, and gloves), machine safety guards, and trench protection are just some of the ways workers are protected.

RIAGC members give the utmost priority to the health and safety of construction workers every day, including times when temperatures vary from the norm. Contractors will take steps to mitigate risks when necessary, including scheduling work earlier or later to avoid performing tasks during times of extreme temperatures, setting up cool-down areas, and taking a total wellness approach to educate employees on the importance of managing health, diet, and hydration. Construction workers are educated and encouraged to immediately notify their supervisor, an on-site safety officer, or OSHA and/or RIDLT if they believe there are unsafe conditions or have concerns.

With such rigorous and robust regulations in place for construction, we are concerned this legislation may complicate the current protection processes, potentially making them less effective, not more. The construction environment is inherently dynamic, and we are concerned this bill fails to take this into account and instead imposes prescriptive requirements on construction industry employers.

Indeed, the bill would require construction safety supervisors and managers, who must meet advanced safety training requirements according to OSHA standards, to complete a generic, publicly available online tutorial every quarter.

The health and safety of those working on a construction job site is a paramount concern for both labor and management. We ask the committee to consider the unique nature of construction and that a one-size-fits-all approach to extreme temperatures will not serve to improve the safety of construction workers in a comprehensive or meaningful way.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. Bennett", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Kerrie Bennett
Executive Director