



March 31, 2025

**Testimony in Support of H-5506 – Employee Free Speech Protection Act**

Chair Corvese and Honorable Members of the House Labor Committee,

On behalf of SEIU 1199 New England, representing more than 5,000 healthcare and service workers across Rhode Island, we write in strong support of **H-5506**, the Employee Free Speech Protection Act.

Our union has a long history of fighting for workers' rights, including the freedom to discuss and participate in union activities without fear of retribution. One notable incident at Butler Hospital years ago underscores the importance of this bill. A group of dietary workers were in the process of joining our union. During this time, one employee was unjustly fired for refusing to attend a captive audience meeting—a tactic used by employers to dissuade workers from unionizing through forced anti-union propaganda sessions.

This event sparked a powerful response from his colleagues, who united to confront their employer, demanding justice. Their solidarity led to the reinstatement of the fired employee, who has continued to serve diligently for over two decades. This story is a testament to the spirit of collective action and the need for legislative protections against such coercive tactics.

**H-5506 does not prohibit employers from sharing their opinions**—it simply ensures that workers cannot be forced to listen to political, religious, or anti-union messaging as a condition of employment.

We urge the committee to pass H-5506 and reaffirm Rhode Island's commitment to protecting free speech and the rights of workers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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