



March 14, 2024

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee
Chair, House Committee on Small Business
Room 135, Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H 7537—2024

Dear Chairwoman McEntee

I am writing today to express my support for House Bill 7537, Relating to State Affairs and Government—Small Business Advocacy. As the chairwoman of the Small Business Advocacy Council (SBAC), I encourage you to consider the changes to council membership in this bill that better align council statute with current offices and committees around the state.

The SBAC statute as currently written in Section 42-91-2 of the Rhode Island General Laws requires council membership to include the Chair, and the Vice-Chair, and a minority party member of the Joint Committee on Small Business. As this joint committee has not been active since 1990, these council seats remain unfilled. To fill these seats, council statute would be updated to include a member of the minority party appointed by the Speaker of the House, the Chair of the House Committee on Small Business, and the chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce.

SBAC statute also currently designates a seat to the Director of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation or their permanent designee. To better align with current state agencies, statute would be updated to include the Rhode Island Secretary of Commerce or their permanent designee. The statute would also be amended to allow officers, partners, or proprietors of nonprofit corporations to be public members of SBAC. Nonprofits are considered small businesses as defined by the United States Small Business Association, but they are excluded from SBAC membership under current statute.

Filling all available council seats and allowing all small businesses the possibility to participate is necessary for SBAC to fulfill its mission of giving small business a voice in government. Thank you to Representative Voas for introducing this important legislation, and I hope you will join me in supporting H 7537.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sabina Matos".

Sabina Matos
Lieutenant Governor
State of Rhode Island

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Small Business
The Honorable Brandon Voas
Nicole McCarty, Esq.