**This Week At the State House**

**Tuesday, May 2nd**

The Senate Commerce Committee will meet Tuesday at the Rise (approximately 4:30pm) in Room 212 to discuss a few bills of interest to the business community.

S.173, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – The Commuter Transportation Benefits Act, affects businesses with 500 or more employees working in the state. The bill requires these entities to create a pre-tax transportation benefit consistent with section 132(f) of the IRS Code at the maximum benefit levels allowable. The amount would be deducted from an employee’s gross income. State and local employers are exempt as are employees subject to a collective bargaining agreement or any business that can show the establishment of the program would pose a severe financial hardship. Any employer that fails to comply is subject to a civil penalty for the first offense of $100-$250 and will have 90 days to come into compliance. After the 90 days have passed, if the employer still fails to comply, a civil penalty of $250 will be assessed every 30 days until the entity implements a program.

S.473, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Payment of Wages requires every Rhode Island business, with thirty or more employees, to post competitive salary ranges for open positions on the company’s hiring page or on third-party hiring platforms. If an employer fails to post the appropriate information, it is guilty of a misdemeanor and can be fined $400 for each separate offense or imprisoned up to one year.

S.754, An Act Relating to Commercial Law – Rhode Island Data Transparency and Privacy Protection Act, is an eighteen-page bill that seeks to restrict the sale of an individual’s personal information to third parties.  This often happens on the internet and is why you see pop-up ads for products and services related to internet searches and other on-line activities.  But there are many reasons businesses collect and sell data to assist customers.  S.754 applies to owners of websites or online services with more than ten employees.  Personal data includes a name and a credit card number, or a license number, debit card number, geolocation data, etc. An owner of such a site must clearly disclose all of the categories of information it collects, as well as all third parties to whom the owner discloses the information.  Customers must be given an opportunity to opt out of the collection of the data, and they must be permitted to review any data collected and to correct it if they wish.  The bill exempts company loyalty programs, rewards programs and club programs such as discount clubs.  S.754 exempts financial institutions and HIPAA organizations, but then pulls them back in on the last page of the bill.  The bill exempts a number of specialized entities like educational facilities, human research programs, contractors working with the government, etc.  Violations of the proposal fall under the penalties of the deceptive trade practices act and includes a fine of $100 to $500 for each inappropriate disclosure of data.  There is no private right of action permitted.  This bill is very comprehensive.  If you have an interest in this issue, the bill can be viewed at: http://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText/BillText23/SenateText23/S0754.pdf

If you wish to submit written testimony, email it to slegislation@rilegislature.gov by 3:00pm Tuesday, May 2, 2023.

**Wednesday, May 3rd**

The House Finance Committee will be discussing the expansion of family and parental leave in the form of H.5990, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Rhode Island Parental and Family Leave Act. At 4:00 in Room 35, this very simple bill will be heard. H.5990 increases the amount of parental or family leave available to an employee from thirteen (13) weeks to twenty-four (24) weeks in any two (2) calendar years. If an employer provides paid leave to employees for a period of time, the additional weeks added under this proposal may remain as unpaid leave. The bill calls for an effective date “upon passage.” The law, as it stands today, applies to employers with 50 or more employees. Leave is available for the care of family members, defined as “a parent, spouse, child, mother-in-law, father-in-law, or the employee himself or herself.” To submit written testimony, use the following link: HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov

**Thursday, May 4th**

A familiar bill is scheduled for hearing in the Senate Labor Committee Thursday at the Rise in room 211. S.243, An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund has been considered in previous years. It creates a fund to financially assist families of children with grave illnesses. S.243 relies on revenues collected through a new $1.50 per employee tax on businesses. According to the Department of Labor and Training’s March report, there are 490,000 nonfarm employees which includes 65,900 government employees. Presumably, this tax would raise over $600,000 for the fund. If you wish to submit testimony, email it to SenateFinance@rilegislature.gov by 3:00 pm Thursday.

The following new bill has been filed:

House Bill No. [6327](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6327.pdf) Fellela, Messier, Potter, Cruz, Serpa**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- HEALTHY AND SAFE FAMILIES AND WORKPLACES ACT (Mandates that the work week be reduced to thirty-two hours and rate of pay for a thirty-two (32) hour workweek would remain the same as the rate of pay for forty hours.) http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6327.pdf

House Bill No. [6343](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6343.pdf) Alzate, Henries, Stewart, Speakman, Cotter, Spears, Casimiro, Kazarian, McEntee, Kislak**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MENSTRUATION LEAVE ACT (Grants leave of up to three (3) days per month to menstruating employees.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6343.pdf>

House Bill No. [6344](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6344.pdf) Alzate, Stewart, Potter, Cruz, Sanchez**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- HEALTHY AND SAFE FAMILIES AND WORKPLACES ACT (Mandates that the work week be reduced to thirty-two hours and rate of pay for a thirty-two (32) hour workweek would remain the same as the rate of pay for forty hours.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6344.pdf>