**An Update from the State House**

Last week the Chamber testified against proposed increases in the minimum wage and tipped wage; cautioned against passing a data privacy bill without study surrounding the effects on businesses as a result of restricting third party data brokers; testified against requiring equal pay for comparable work (a term that has no black and white definition); and testified in support of legislation that would allow any unused portion of the estate tax credit of a deceased spouse transferable to the surviving spouse. It was a busy week.

**Senate Labor Committee Set to Take Votes**

The **Senate Labor Committee** will meet **Wednesday, April 3, At the Ris**e (approximately 4:30 p.m.) to vote on a number of bills and to take testimony on others.

Committee members will vote on **S.90** – the workplace bullying bill that makes employers vicariously liable for bullying actions of employees unless the employer can show reasonable care to try to prevent the bullying. An amendment may be forthcoming, but at the time of publication, no details were available. <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/SenateText19/S0090.pdf> **S.330**, which requires employers with 4 or more employees to provide sexual harassment training to employees within one month of hiring and within one month of an employee taking a management position, will also be subject to a vote. <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/SenateText19/S0330.pdf> An increase in the unemployment benefit rate is scheduled for a vote as well – **S.370**. <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/SenateText19/S0370.pdf>

**House Labor Hearing Scheduled**

On **Wednesday, April 3, At the Rise** (approximately 4:30 p.m.) in **Room 203**, the **House Labor Committee** will hear testimony on three bills of interest.

**H.5892** allows catering businesses and food trucks to pay employees as restaurants pay employees – no overtime pay for hours worked on Sundays and Holidays if those days are a part of the 40 hour work week. Rhode Island is one of two states to require premium pay for Sundays and Holidays when it is within the individual’s 40 hour work week. Massachusetts voted to phase out its overtime pay requirement, meaning Rhode Island will be alone in this practice. <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5892.pdf>

**H.5917**, a bill titled “wage fairness,” was introduced March 28th and will be heard in committee Wednesday. The bill states that “No employer shall pay any of its employees at a wage rate less than the rate paid to employees of another race, color, or gender for equal work, except” if the difference is related to seniority, experience, training, skill or ability, shift worked, time of day, or “Availability for other operations or any other reasonable differentiation except difference in sex.” H.5917 bars employers from asking for an applicant’s wage history or from relying on the history if they obtain the information in some way. The bill allows employees to discuss their wages with other employees, unless the individual has access to wage information as a part of his/her job description, i.e. human resources. (See the link to the bill below)

**H.5918**, is the third bill to be heard in the House Labor Committee Wednesday. (see link below). It was also filed March 28th. Employers with more than 20 employees are required to provide one of three options to employees: (1) a pre-tax transportation fringe benefit where the employer deducts an amount from the employee’s wages to be used for commuter transit in accordance with section 132(f)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code; (2) an employer-paid benefit program where the employer supplies a transit pass for each employee for travel to and from the employer's place of business or work site; or (3) employer-provided transportation at no cost to the covered employee in a van or bus operated by or for the employer. Failure to implement a program comes with a civil fine of $100 - $250 for the first offense, and $250 for each subsequent offense. The effective for this bill is January 1, 2020.

The following bills were filed last week:

House Bill No. [5903](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5903.pdf) Edwards, Shekarchi, Kennedy, Solomon, Casey**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE - INSURANCE CONSUMER PROTECTION SALES ACT (Prohibits person/business entity from conditioning requiring offer for sale/lease of tangible personal property on purchase of ins. From any ins. producer/insurer or releasing consumer's personal identification info eff. 1/1/20.)

House Bill No. [5904](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5904.pdf) Kislak, Walsh, Slater, Ajello, Williams**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- HOUSING MAINTENANCE AND OCCUPANCY CODE (Places responsibility on landlords to house evicted tenants due to landlord neglect/gives cities/towns revolving fund account flexibility/allows municipal lien similar to property taxes for action against property.)

House Bill No. [5912](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5912.pdf)  Blazejewski, Casimiro, Alzate, Mendez, Shanley**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- TEMPORARY DISABILITY INSURANCE (Increases tax wage base for contributions to TDI /TCI, expands eligibility, increases benefit rates, adds sibling and grandchild in coverage benefits, increases temp caregiver weeks, and institutes fines for not reinstating an employee who uses program.)

House Bill No. [5916](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5916.pdf) McNamara, Bennett, Casimiro, Kazarian, Kislak**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE--MARKET STABILITY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT (Establishes the Rhode Island health insurance market stability and consumer protection act in order to update state law to reflect current insurance standards, practice and regulation to maintain market stability.)

House Bill No. [5917](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5917.pdf) Ruggiero, Donovan, Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Williams**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- WAGE FAIRNESS ACT (The wage fairness act prohibits employers from asking job applicants about salary history. It also prohibits discrimination in payment of wages, and allows employees to discuss their salary with co-employees.)

House Bill No. [5918](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5918.pdf) Noret, Shekarchi, Serodio, Amore, Abney**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- ESTABLISHING THE "COMMUTER TRANSPORTATION BENEFITS ACT" (Establishes the commuter transportation benefit act.)

House Bill No. [5930](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5930.pdf) Edwards, Bennett, Cassar, Ackerman, Williams**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW--GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS -- CONSUMER PRIVACY PROTECTION (Creates "Consumer Privacy Protection Act.")

Senate Bill No. [738](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/SenateText19/S0738.pdf) Miller, McCaffrey, Ruggerio, Goodwin, Goldin**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE--MARKET STABILITY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT (Establishes the Rhode Island health insurance market stability and consumer protection act in order to update state law to reflect current insurance standards, practice and regulation to maintain market stability.)