

March 26, 2024

**The Honorable Joseph Solomon
Chair of the House Corporations Committee
Rhode Island Capitol
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903**

Re: Opposition Testimony to HB 7941

Chair Solomon, Vice Chairs O'Brien and Caldwell, and Distinguished Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Electronic Transactions Association (“ETA”), the leading trade association for the payments industry, we appreciate the opportunity to provide this written testimony in opposition to HB 7941 that poses a threat to the stability of the lending market and, more importantly, to the ability of consumers and entrepreneurs in Rhode Island to access affordable capital. The legislation would require the state of Rhode Island to opt out of the Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act (DIDMCA) that was enacted over 40 years ago to allow for FDIC-insured state-chartered banks to export rates across the country to provide innovative credit products for consumers and businesses. This could put Rhode Island and Rhode Island businesses at risk of losing additional methods of accessing credit compared to residents of other states since federally chartered banks will not be impacted by this legislation.

Opting out of DIDMCA is an untested concept, so the implications and potential unintended consequences of this decision are not yet known. HB 7941 would introduce additional uncertainty into the market and would have far-reaching consequences on consumers and lending in Rhode Island.

Impact to Rhode Island Consumers: If enacted, HB 7941 would significantly negatively impact Rhode Island’s consumer credit market, leading to a substantial reduction of credit access for Rhode Island consumers. Imposing stricter interest rate caps will limit access to credit for consumers in the state. Additionally, it will discourage financial institutions from creating new products tailored to meet the needs of underserved communities. It is important for Rhode Island policymakers to carefully consider the potential consequences of this legislation to ensure there is a balance between consumer protection and maintaining access to credit. HB 7941 will not affect federally chartered banks, who will continue to offer the same loan products they currently do at interest rates that exceed Rhode Island caps. Since state chartered banks will be affected by HB 7941, these providers may choose to limit or alter their product offerings in Rhode Island as a result of the passage of the bill. This would result in Rhode Islanders having far less choice in what products they can select and could lead to a lack of access to credit within the state.

Impact to Small Businesses: Limiting credit options not only affects Rhode Island consumers but also has significant ramifications for small business owners across the state. Many of these entrepreneurs rely on individual access to credit to fulfill their funding needs, particularly when traditional financing avenues are inaccessible or inadequate. Small business owners frequently encounter challenges in securing necessary capital to sustain and expand their operations. Passing

HB 7941 would risk further exacerbating these difficulties, hindering entrepreneurs' ability to access vital resources for growth and development.

It is important to recognize that small and short-term loans play a pivotal role in providing small business owners and entrepreneurs with the capital they need to thrive. Whether it is purchasing inventory, covering operational expenses, or funding expansion initiatives, these financing options are essential for the success and sustainability of small businesses. Furthermore, the economic impact of small businesses cannot be overstated. They serve as engines of growth, driving innovation, creating jobs, and fostering economic activity within Rhode Island communities. By limiting access to credit, the state of Rhode Island would risk stifling the potential of these businesses to contribute positively to the state's economy. Passing HB 7941 would only serve to curtail the positive impact that Rhode Island entrepreneurs and small business owners could have on the state's economy. Instead of constraining credit options, we should be exploring ways to support and empower small businesses, enabling them to thrive and succeed.

Conclusion: ETA and its members support an inclusive financial system that provides high quality, secure, and affordable financial services for the broadest possible set of consumers and small businesses. ETA encourages policymakers to support these efforts through policies that support innovation and the use of technology in financial products and services rather than legislative efforts to restrict this innovation and ability to access credit by opting out of the longstanding DIDMCA legal framework.

ETA stands ready to engage in constructive dialogue and collaboration to address the concerns raised by HB 7941. We believe that by working together, we can find solutions that support the growth of small businesses and foster innovation in Rhode Island.

* * * *

We appreciate you taking the time to consider these important issues. If you would like to discuss any aspect of our comments, please contact me or ETA Executive Vice President Scott Talbott at Stalbott@electran.org.

Respectfully Submitted,



Brian Yates
Senior Director, State Government Affairs
Electronic Transactions Association
202.677.7714 | byates@electran.org