

April 2, 2025

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese, Chair
House Labor Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: BILL NUMBER H-5134 – AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MUNICIPAL POLICE
ARBITRATION**

Dear Chairman Corvese and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I am writing to express our strong concerns regarding House Bill 5134, which seeks to extend provisions of existing collective bargaining agreements for municipal police officers until a successor agreement is reached or an interest arbitration award is rendered. While we understand the intent behind this bill, we believe it poses significant risks to the fiscal health of municipalities and undermines the principles of responsible governance.

House Bill 5134 would significantly constrain municipal leaders during labor negotiations, preventing them from acting in the best interests of their taxpayers. By automatically extending collective bargaining agreements, this legislation removes the expiration date as a motivating factor for parties to engage in timely and meaningful negotiations. As a result, it diminishes the incentive for both parties to resolve disputes efficiently and compromises the integrity of the negotiation process.

Additionally, the proposed automatic and indefinite contract continuation disregards the unique circumstances and financial conditions of individual municipalities. While temporary contract extensions may be appropriate in certain cases to facilitate negotiations and maintain positive labor relations, the broad, one-size-fits-all approach mandated by this bill does not account for the diverse fiscal realities faced by Rhode Island's cities and towns. Many municipalities are already contending with constrained budgets, and the inability to renegotiate contractual terms in a timely manner could exacerbate financial strain.

Personnel costs represent the largest category of municipal spending, with public safety personnel expenditures among the most significant. Given shrinking revenues, increasing healthcare and pension liabilities, and other financial pressures, delaying contract negotiations through automatic extension measures will likely result in higher property taxes and reductions in essential public services. Such outcomes are unsustainable and would be detrimental to communities statewide.

While we recognize the importance of fostering harmonious labor relations, we believe that House Bill 5134 imposes an undue burden on municipalities and taxpayers. We stand ready to work with the bill's sponsor and other stakeholders to explore alternative measures that balance responsible governance, fiscal sustainability, and the interests of both municipal public safety personnel and the residents they serve.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Labor Committee