



Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

April 2, 2025

The Honorable Arthur Corvese
House Labor Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith St
Providence RI, 02903

Dear Chairman Corvese and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The City of Providence strongly opposes House Bill 5134, which would mandate contract continuation for police officers. If enacted, this legislation would undermine our ability to negotiate fair and equitable collective bargaining agreements with police unions.


As the Committee is aware, a similar law affecting municipal workers and teachers is currently being challenged in court by multiple municipalities across the state, including Providence. We urge the Committee to delay any expansion of contract continuation laws until this lawsuit is resolved. Regardless of the litigation, we continue to oppose any legislation that imposes automatic contract continuation, as it limits our ability to negotiate in the best interests of taxpayers. The expiration dates of collective bargaining agreements are essential for ensuring a structured pathway to future agreements.

Historically, when negotiations extend beyond a contract's expiration date, the City and the Union have mutually agreed to continue contractual provisions—an established best practice already codified for certain collective bargaining groups, such as firefighters and EMS professionals through a 2017 amendment. We would support similar legislation codifying this best practice, but there is no need to mandate indefinite contract continuation when existing laws provide a framework for negotiations and dispute resolution.

Providence maintains a strong, collaborative relationship with our police union and is committed to good-faith labor negotiations. We recognize that contract discussions often require additional time, which is why we support temporary contract continuation when mutually agreed upon. However, this bill goes too far by imposing automatic and indefinite contract continuation, ultimately giving unions an unfair advantage at the expense of taxpayers and businesses.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to oppose House Bill 5134.

Sincerely,


Brett P. Smiley