

March 25, 2025

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey, Chair
House Municipal Government and Housing
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: BILL NUMBER H-5230 – AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- OPTIONAL RETIREMENT FOR MEMBERS OF POLICE FORCE AND FIREFIGHTERS

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I am writing to express our opposition to House Bill 5230, which would allow police officers and firefighters to retire without reduction in benefits after reaching the age of fifty-seven (57) with at least twenty (20) years of service. While we appreciate the intent of this legislation in recognizing the dedication of our public safety personnel, we have serious concerns regarding the financial implications for municipalities.

Public safety pensions represent a significant portion of municipal budgets, and any adjustments to retirement benefits must be evaluated carefully to ensure fiscal sustainability. The proposed change could result in substantial cost increases for local governments, particularly if it accelerates retirement and increases pension liabilities. Before moving forward with this policy shift, we believe it is essential to conduct a thorough fiscal analysis to determine the impact on municipal budgets and pension systems.

Given the potential financial consequences, we believe it is imperative to conduct a detailed fiscal analysis to assess the cost burden on cities and towns. Only with this data can we properly weigh the benefits of this proposal against the ability of municipalities to afford it.

The League stands ready to collaborate with the bill sponsor and all stakeholders to explore alternative approaches that achieve the policy's intent while ensuring financial sustainability for our communities. We welcome the opportunity to work on amended language that addresses any unintended consequences and balances the interests of both public safety personnel and municipal budgets.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our perspective. We look forward to continued discussions on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. Rossi".

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Municipal Government and Housing