



**Testimony from Brian M. Daniels, Executive Director
H 5455– Rhode Island Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program
House Committee on Finance – February 24, 2021**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify.

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns encourages passage of H 5455, which would allow state appropriations for the Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program. The League supported the creation of the program several years ago, but the General Assembly provided no funding for it and specifically prevented state appropriations from being used for the program.

Modeled on the successful MassWorks program next door, the Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program would provide cities and towns with infrastructure funding to promote economic development and enhance the quality of life for their residents. Our city and town leaders have been working to promote economic development in their communities – converting mill buildings and factories into residential and mixed-use facilities, rehabilitating commercial centers and revitalizing blighted areas. In many cases, these projects require substantial infrastructure investments – for example, drinking water and wastewater upgrades, telecommunications improvements, road repairs and new sidewalks. State funding for the Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program would help cities and towns leverage investment from private developers, as well as other state and federal funds, to make these needed improvements.

Just as importantly, the legislation encourages development consistent with local land use decisions. If a community wants to promote transit-oriented development or mixed-use development in a particular area, this legislation encourages the necessary investment in the areas it has specifically targeted for economic growth.

The General Assembly has emphasized the importance of building new residential and commercial projects to promote economic development in Rhode Island. Unfortunately, the lack of appropriate infrastructure in city and town growth centers is often a constraint to development. State funding for the Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program would show that the General Assembly is committed to this cause and would support development projects in numerous communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.



**Testimony from Brian M. Daniels, Executive Director
H 5225 – Public Property and Works
House Committee on Finance – February 24, 2021**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify on H 5225.

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns has serious concerns with expanding the definition of “public works” in state law to include work performed by municipalities. The change would have broad and substantial impacts on local procurement processes. Chapter 37-13 of R.I. General Laws includes many requirements for public works projects that cities and towns would struggle to implement, including the requirement for apprenticeship programs for any project value in excess of \$1 million. With many cities and towns having limited budgets and much smaller public works departments than the state, passage of H 5225 would increase public works project costs and compliance requirements for municipalities. At a time when cities and towns are facing higher costs from COVID-19 response as well as lower tax revenues, the state should not be passing additional unfunded mandates that will ultimately be borne by the taxpayers. For that reason, we urge the committee not to support this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.