

Portsmouth Water and Fire District

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House Corporations
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H7871

We are writing in support of House Bill 7871, introduced by Representatives Finkelman, Baginski, DeSimone, and Noret.

Under current law (R.I. Gen. Laws § 24-8.1-2), the relocation of utilities places a significant and often unpredictable burden on municipal and quasi-municipal public water suppliers. These requirements are imposed without adequate consideration of several critical factors, including: (1) the availability of funding; (2) existing capital plans and construction already underway; (3) potential conflicts with short-, medium-, and long-term system planning; and (4) the necessary permitting and regulatory approval processes required by the Rhode Island Water Resources Board, the Rhode Island Department of Health, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In many cases, the roadway projects subject to § 24-8.1-2 are supported by federal funding. Requiring local utilities to contribute financially to projects that are already fully funded creates unnecessary complications. Such requirements may jeopardize compliance with federal funding conditions and impose additional, unwarranted costs on water suppliers and their ratepayers. Moreover, it compels utilities to subsidize projects for which the Rhode Island Department of Transportation already has sufficient funding.

House Bill 7871 would provide a more equitable and practical framework for utility relocations by better aligning financial responsibility with project funding sources and reducing undue burdens on public water suppliers.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to support passage of House Bill 7871. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
PORTSMOUTH WATER AND FIRE DISTRICT



Jessica Lynch, P.E.
General Manager and Chief Engineer