



*Distinctive Communities
Powerful Alliance*

April 11, 2024

The Honorable Representative Marvin L. Abney
Chairman House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith St
Providence RI, 02903

RE: Bill Number: 7552 AN ACT RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee:

I am writing to express our concerns regarding House Bill 7552, particularly regarding the proposed requirement for every city and town to maintain a municipal veterans' service officer (MVSO). While we appreciate the intent behind this bill and its aim to enhance support and outreach for veterans, we are apprehensive about the potential financial implications on municipalities.

The Rhode Island League acknowledges the significance of supporting our veterans and ensuring they receive the assistance they deserve. However, we are worried that the language in House Bill 7552, mandating that "every city and town shall maintain a municipal veteran's service officer," could pose financial challenges to municipalities, especially those with already constrained budgets.

The provision specifying that the designated MVSO must be a military veteran, or that the role may be a collateral duty assigned to a military veteran already on staff, is commendable. Nevertheless, we urge for careful consideration to prevent adding financial burdens on cities and towns.

We propose working collaboratively with the bill's sponsor to develop language that ensures the necessary support for veterans while safeguarding municipalities from any undue financial strain. This could involve exploring alternative funding mechanisms or identifying resources that mitigate the impact on local budgets.

The Rhode Island League is committed to working constructively with the sponsor to achieve our shared goal of supporting veterans without imposing additional financial hardship on municipalities. We believe that through dialogue and cooperation, we can refine House Bill 7552 to strike an appropriate balance.

Thank you for considering our concerns regarding this important matter. We look forward to the opportunity to discuss these issues further and to contribute to the development of effective legislation that benefits our veterans and communities alike.

On behalf of the League of Cities and Towns thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David M. Bodah". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David M. Bodah
Associate Director

Cc: House Finance Committee
Ernie Almonte, Executive Director