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February 8, 2024

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: House Bill Number: H7263 Relating to State Affairs and Government – Law Enforcement Bill of Rights.

Dear Chairman Craven:

I am writing on behalf of the Rhode Island Police Chiefs' Association (RIPCA) to voice our support to the House bill referenced above regarding Law Enforcement Bill of Rights (LEOBOR).

The RIPCA has been a strong supporter of making some small but significant changes to the current LEOBOR procedures while still maintaining that the current process, although used infrequently, still works. Our primary points of changes are to change the name from LEOBOR to the Law Enforcement Officer's Due Process, Accountability and Transparency Act, as well as to modify the participants on the hearing board, expand the number of days allowed under summary discipline and to give Chiefs the ability to speak more directly to the status of an officer that is under investigation for a criminal action. The RIPCA has frequently testified as well as met with legislators, community stakeholders and police union officials to discuss proposed changes to LEOBOR and believe the legislation presented in House bill H7263 satisfies a large majority of those concerns.

The RIPCA recognizes that the public has a strong interest in assuring that if a police officer is found to break the public's trust, uses excessive force or violates department policies, that the employing police department will thoroughly investigate those claims and if sustained will hold the officer accountable for their behavior. We also must recognize that the officer being investigated doesn't give up certain rights just because they are a public employee, and this always must be considered when releasing information pertaining to investigations to the public.

Continue

Thank you for allowing me to submit this written testimony on behalf of the RIPCA and as always, I am available for any follow-up questions you or the committee may have, and we are willing to continue discussions with the bill's sponsors.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "S. Wordell".

Sidney Wordell
Executive Director
Rhode Island Police Chiefs' Association