



May 7, 2024

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

RE: Bill Number: 7263 & 2096 RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

Dear Chairman Craven and Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to express our support for House Bill 7263 and Senate Bill 2096 as amended, now known as the Law Enforcement Officers' Due Process, Accountability, and Transparency Act. The revisions made to these bills following diligent discussions and collaboration between both chambers reflect a balanced approach that considers input from various stakeholders and addresses this critical issue that has persisted for many years across the state.

The establishment of a five-member hearing committee, composed of qualified and randomly selected law enforcement officers, a retired judge, and an attorney selected in consultation with the Supreme Court's committee on racial and ethnic fairness and the Rhode Island Bar Association's task force on diversity and inclusion, is a pivotal step towards ensuring due process, accountability, and transparency within our law enforcement agencies.

Moreover, the implementation of a two-tier summary suspension structure, coupled with provisions allowing police chiefs to make public statements and release video evidence in certain instances, strikes an important balance between maintaining public trust and protecting the rights of law enforcement officers.

We are particularly encouraged by the provisions requiring the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) to publish information relating to all pending hearings on its website and report suspensions and findings to National Decertification Indices. These measures will enhance transparency and accountability within our law enforcement community.

We urge support of House Bill 7263 & Senate Bill 2096 and advocate for their passage. This legislation represents a significant step forward in addressing longstanding concerns within our law enforcement system and deserves our full support. We acknowledge that this bill may not satisfy everyone, but it is a step in the right direction for the State of Rhode Island. By enacting this legislation, we look to enhance public trust and accountability while providing a framework that respects the rights and responsibilities of our law enforcement professionals.

On behalf of the League of Cities and Towns thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express our views.

Sincerely,

David M. Bodah
Associate Director

Cc: House Judiciary Committee
Ernie Almonte, Executive Director