



*Distinctive Communities  
Powerful Alliance*

March 24, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: HOUSE BILL 8118 – AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS' DUE PROCESS, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND TRANSPARENCY ACT

Dear Chair McEntee and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, which represents the interests of all 39 cities and towns across the state, this testimony expresses support for House Bill 8118, which proposes amendments to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-28.6-1 of the Law Enforcement Officers' Due Process, Accountability, and Transparency Act (LEODPATDA).

The bill addresses an important oversight in the current law by limiting the routine appointment of legal counsel to assist hearing committees. Prior to July 2025, hearing committees consisted solely of three police officers, who occasionally required legal counsel to navigate substantive legal issues. Even under this previous structure, the appointment of legal counsel was rare. Historical data from more than 100 hearings conducted between 1975 and 2025 indicates that counsel was appointed in only two instances, and in both cases, their role was limited to addressing specific legal questions.

Since the law was amended last year to include a retired judge and a practicing attorney as members of the five-person hearing committee, the appointment of additional legal counsel has become routine. Counsel frequently participates in hearings for the entire process, creating unanticipated costs for both municipalities and officers, with bills in some cases exceeding \$40,000. These expenses were neither anticipated nor sustainable for the parties involved.

House Bill 8118 preserves the ability to appoint legal counsel, but only upon written application by both the law enforcement agency and the accused officer, and at the discretion of the chairperson. In such cases, the law enforcement agency and the officer would each be responsible for 50% of the legal fees unless otherwise agreed. This change ensures that counsel is available when genuinely needed while preventing automatic, high-cost appointments that offer little additional value, given the presence of a judge and attorney on the committee. This amendment balances fairness, due process, and transparency in disciplinary hearings, while protecting municipal resources and preventing unanticipated financial burdens for officers.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective on House Bill 8118.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy R. Rossi".

Randy R. Rossi  
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Judiciary Committee