



Mayor of Providence

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April 2, 2025

Brett P. Smiley

Chairman Arthur Corvese  
House Labor Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Corvese and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The City of Providence strongly opposes House Bill 5133, which would mandate the continuation of all contract terms for firefighters if a successor agreement is not reached. If enacted, this legislation would limit the City's ability to negotiate fair and equitable collective bargaining agreements with our fire and EMS personnel. Legislation like this disincentivizes firefighter unions from negotiating in good faith while the City continues to incur rising operating costs, ultimately forcing municipal leaders to struggle to meet the needs of residents and business owners.

As the Committee is aware, a similar law affecting municipal workers and teachers is currently being challenged in court by 19 municipalities across the state, including Providence. We urge the Committee to delay any expansion of contract continuation laws until this lawsuit is resolved.

Contract continuation restricts our ability to negotiate in the best interests of taxpayers. The expiration date of collective bargaining agreements is critical for providing a structured pathway to future agreements. When necessary, the City and the Union have mutually agreed to continue contractual provisions—something already permitted under current law. In 2017, the City of Providence and several other communities supported legislation that codified this best practice. Any additional legislation that mandates indefinite contract continuation is unnecessary, as existing laws already provide a clear framework for resolving disputes and negotiating agreements.

Providence maintains a strong, collaborative relationship with our firefighters and supports good-faith labor negotiations. We understand that contract discussions often require additional time, which is why we support temporary contract continuation when agreed upon by both parties. However, this bill goes too far by imposing automatic and indefinite contract continuation, ultimately granting an unfair advantage to unions at the expense of taxpayers.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to oppose House Bill 5133

Sincerely,

  
Brett P. Smiley