

April 2, 2025

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese, Chair  
House Labor Committee  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: BILL NUMBER H-5135 – AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES' ARBITRATION**

Dear Chairman Corvese and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I am writing to express our opposition to House Bill 5135, which aims to recognize the opportunity for municipal employees to utilize interest arbitration and establish new factors for arbitrators to consider. While we understand the intent behind this bill, we believe that its current language and provisions are flawed and would have detrimental effects on our municipalities.

One of the primary concerns we have with House Bill 5135 is its provision regarding the comparison of wages and hourly conditions of employment in similarly skilled jobs. By granting arbitrators the authority to consider such comparisons, the bill effectively imposes a one-size-fits-all approach to municipal labor negotiations. This approach fails to account for the diverse needs and circumstances of different municipalities, disregarding the principle that what works for one municipality may not work for another.

The language of the bill regarding comparisons of wage rates and hourly conditions of employment is vague and open to interpretation. The notion of comparing municipal employers with "similarly skilled" employees under "similar working conditions" lacks clarity and could lead to arbitrary decisions that are not grounded in sound economic principles or the realities of local labor markets.

Moreover, granting arbitrators the power to render awards over all negotiated matters, including the expenditure of money, raises serious concerns about fiscal responsibility and local autonomy. By allowing arbitrators to override negotiated agreements and impose financial obligations on municipalities, House Bill 5135 undermines the ability of local governments to make responsible budgetary decisions that reflect the priorities and needs of their communities.

In conclusion, we urge you to reconsider and oppose House Bill 5135 in its current form. We are committed to developing legislation with the sponsor that promotes fair and sustainable labor relations in municipalities while respecting the principles of local autonomy and fiscal responsibility. We stand ready to work with the bill's sponsor and other stakeholders to explore alternative measures that balance responsible governance, fiscal sustainability, and the interests of both municipal public safety personnel and the residents they serve.

Thank you for taking our perspective into consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. Rossi", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Randy R. Rossi  
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Labor Committee