



*Distinctive Communities  
Powerful Alliance*

March 18, 2026

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

RE: HOUSE BILL 7972– AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC PROPERTY AND WORKS -- STATE PURCHASES

Dear Chairman Corvese and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we write to offer testimony in support of House Bill 7972, which would amend the process for creating and governing Project Labor Agreements (“PLAs”) on public works projects.

Municipalities across Rhode Island are responsible for delivering complex, large-scale infrastructure projects efficiently, safely, and in a manner that protects taxpayer investments. House Bill 7972 provides a more practical and transparent framework for the use of PLAs, while maintaining appropriate local discretion.

As background, a 2002 Rhode Island Supreme Court decision established a significantly high bar for public agencies seeking to utilize PLAs. The Court required that any agency must first conduct an “objective, reasoned study” demonstrating that a PLA on a large, complex project meets the goals and objectives of the State Purchases Act. While well-intentioned, this requirement has proven to be both time-consuming and costly.

Since that ruling, public agencies in Rhode Island have conducted more than 50 independent studies on large, complex public works projects. In every single instance, those studies have concluded that the use of a PLA meets the goals and objectives of the State Purchases Act. There has not been a single case in which a Rhode Island public body determined that a PLA would not meet those standards.

House Bill 7972 recognizes this consistent outcome and eliminates the need for redundant and costly pre-project studies. This change will reduce unnecessary administrative burdens and save taxpayer dollars, while still allowing agencies to make informed project decisions.

The legislation also establishes a presumption in favor of PLAs for large-scale public works projects, defined as those valued at \$25 million or more, undertaken by the state, as well as local projects receiving at least 35% state funding. This approach reflects the scale, complexity, and risk associated with these projects, where ensuring a reliable supply of skilled labor and minimizing disruptions is critical.

The bill preserves flexibility and accountability. If a public agency does not want to use a PLA for a given project, it must provide a clear explanation and submit a project staffing plan. This ensures transparency while respecting local decision-making authority.

The framework proposed in this legislation is consistent with federal policy direction. A similar approach to PLAs on large-scale projects has been advanced through recent federal executive action, reinforcing the value of these agreements in promoting project stability, workforce readiness, and risk mitigation.

From a municipal perspective, House Bill 7972 strikes a thoughtful balance. It streamlines an outdated process, aligns with established practice, and supports the successful delivery of major public investments, while maintaining appropriate safeguards and local discretion.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "R. R. Rossi".

Randy R. Rossi  
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Labor Committee