

BRETT P. SMILEY
Mayor



DEREK M. SILVA
Chief of Department

Department of Public Safety, Fire Department
"Building Pride in Providence"

April 15, 2026

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

Dear Chair Corvese and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 7041, *An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Firefighters' Arbitration*, which would mandate the continuation of all contract terms for firefighters if a successor agreement is not reached. If enacted, this legislation would constrain the negotiation of fair and equitable collective bargaining agreements with our fire and EMS personnel. Legislation like this disincentivizes firefighter unions from negotiating in good faith while operating costs continue to increase, ultimately impacting a municipality's ability to the needs of the communities we all serve.

The expiration dates of collective bargaining agreements are essential for ensuring 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.

The Providence Fire Department maintains a strong, collaborative relationship with all stakeholders involved in negotiations and remains committed to supporting good-faith labor discussion. Contract discussions often take time, and we support a mutually agreed upon temporary contract continuation. However, this bill goes too far by imposing automatic and indefinite contract continuation, which would ultimately constrain the ability to manage resources effectively on behalf of taxpayers.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to oppose House Bill 7041.

Sincerely,

Derek M. Silva
Chief of Department