



*Distinctive Communities
Powerful Alliance*

April 15, 2026

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

RE: HOUSE BILL 7082– 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, we write to express our respect and appreciation for the dedication, professionalism, and service of municipal employees, whose work is critical to the daily functioning of Rhode Island's cities and towns. At the same time, we have concerns regarding House Bill 7082, which would recognize that municipal employees have the opportunity to utilize binding arbitration and would establish new factors for arbitrators to consider, including comparisons of wages and hourly conditions in similarly skilled jobs. The bill would also grant arbitrators the authority to render awards over all negotiated matters, including the expenditure of municipal funds. While we strongly support fair compensation and structured dispute resolution for municipal employees, the approach outlined in this legislation raises several challenges for cities and towns across Rhode Island.

First, the bill significantly limits local flexibility by giving arbitrators broad authority over matters that directly affect municipal budgets. Cities and towns operate with unique financial realities, tax bases, and operational priorities, and binding arbitration over all negotiated terms, including wages, benefits, and other financial commitments, could force municipalities to implement awards that exceed their available resources. This could have direct impacts on the delivery of essential services and the ability of local governments to balance budgets responsibly.

Second, the continuation of all contractual provisions until a successor agreement is reached, combined with the arbitrators' authority to consider standardized comparisons across municipalities, effectively imposes a one-size-fits-all model. This approach does not take into account the differing sizes, capacities, and fiscal circumstances of Rhode Island's municipalities and may create inequities or unsustainable financial obligations for smaller communities.

Finally, while the factors outlined for arbitration, such as comparisons to similarly skilled jobs and consideration of public interest, provide guidance, they do not fully reflect the nuanced circumstances of individual municipalities, including local operational challenges, workforce composition, and long-term strategic priorities.

We believe municipal employees deserve fair and equitable treatment, and that arbitration can be an important tool in resolving disputes in a way that protects employees while maintaining essential services. However, the broad powers granted to arbitrators under House Bill 7082 could inadvertently constrain local governance and limit municipalities' ability to make prudent financial and operational decisions.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to carefully consider the impacts of this legislation on cities and towns, and to explore amendments that preserve employee protections while maintaining local discretion and fiscal responsibility.

The League appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and share our perspective with the Committee and stands ready to work with the sponsor to explore solutions that balance fair treatment for municipal employees with the need to preserve local discretion and fiscal responsibility.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. R. Rossi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Labor Committee