

May 21, 2026

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

RE: HOUSE BILL 8524 – AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - WORKERS' COMPENSATION - GENERAL PROVISIONS

Dear Chairman Corvese and Honorable Committee Members,

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns respectfully submits this testimony in support of House Bill 8524, an omnibus workers' compensation measure advanced through the Workers' Compensation Advisory Council process.

This legislation reflects a series of important clarifications and updates to the workers' compensation system, including provisions related to the jurisdiction and authority of the Workers' Compensation Court, the court's ability to make determinations regarding certain claims and officer injury status, and provisions addressing reimbursement matters, including hearing-aid reimbursement for certain employees. Collectively, these provisions represent thoughtful efforts to improve administrative clarity and promote more consistent adjudication within the workers' compensation framework.

As the General Assembly considers this legislation, the League also believes it presents an opportunity to examine the broader statutory framework surrounding R.I.G.L. § 45-19-1, the state's "injured on duty" statute. Over time, coverage under this statute has evolved through a series of incremental amendments adding specific occupational classifications to an otherwise longstanding framework originally centered on police and fire personnel.

While each of these additions has been considered on its own merits, the cumulative effect has been a statutory structure that applies similar protections through a series of discrete occupational categories rather than through a more uniform framework.

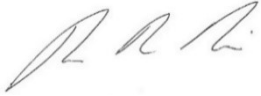
Accordingly, the League respectfully suggests consideration of the following amendment concept:

- To the extent the legislation expands or clarifies occupational protections, reimbursements, or related determinations within the § 45-19-1 framework, the General Assembly may wish to consider applying those standards more consistently across all employees already covered under R.I.G.L. § 45-19-1, rather than continuing to extend such provisions through incremental occupational additions over time.

Such an approach could promote greater consistency in statutory application, improve administrative clarity in claims handling and court determinations, and reduce the need for ongoing classification-specific amendments. At the same time, the League recognizes that any such policy consideration should be evaluated carefully with respect to fiscal impact and implementation.

The League appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and share our perspective with the committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. R. Rossi', written in a cursive style.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Labor Committee