



Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

February 27, 2025

Representative Steve Casey  
Chair, House Municipal Government and Housing Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing this letter in opposition to House Bill 5510, AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- ACTIONS BY AND AGAINST TOWNS. If passed, this act would require a municipality to disclose on their official website the specific issues, details and costs of any legal action of which the town or city is a named defendant within sixty (60) days after the close of their fiscal year.

If passed, House Bill 5110 would significantly increase litigation costs for cities and towns, while also fostering an inequitable legal environment. Under the provisions of the bill, municipalities would be the only parties in lawsuits required to publicly disclose certain information, creating an imbalance. Individuals who have filed or are considering lawsuits against a city would gain access to potentially sensitive information, which could be leveraged in their efforts to extract financial settlements from those cities and towns.

Moreover, this bill imposes an unfunded mandate, necessitating considerable employee time and resources to ensure compliance. In many cases, municipalities enter into cost-sharing agreements for joint lawsuits or utilize outside counsel to mitigate conflicts of interest. However, these collaborative arrangements would be severely impacted by the financial burdens imposed by this legislation, potentially altering the ability of cities and towns to manage legal matters efficiently.

Given the significant challenges with this bill, I respectfully urge the committee to vote no House Bill 5510.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brett P. Smiley".

Brett P. Smiley  
Mayor