

Respectable Members of the House Municipal Government and Housing Committee,

Thank you for your service, time, and consideration on behalf of the people of Providence. Your presence here today signals your willingness to weigh the facts above all else in determining whether House Bill 6162 should pass out of committee. I don't believe it should.

I'm inclined to make this argument on the basis of fairness—a problem made evident by tax decreases for wealthier landlords—or on the basis of preservation. It's clear that a developer-first, profit-first approach has delivered Providence into a soulless, gentrifying new reality. I'm inclined to make my argument this way because Providence has long been a city of the arts and community. And because, as a person from Providence, those are things I care about. But I won't—because I understand the logic of this committee often rests on economic performance, and the mayor of Providence believes this plan is a winner on those merits.

He could not be more wrong.

Let's begin with the core issue behind this bill: a funding cut to Providence Public Schools and a budget boost to the Providence Police Department. The city is already underserving its children, and this only makes things worse. There's nothing inherently wrong with increasing the police budget—if it aligns with community need and city growth. This does neither.

This shift follows historically low crime and hasn't resulted in better management of city life—people still park on sidewalks in every neighborhood. But beyond that, it's simply bad economics. It sets us on a dangerous trajectory—socially and fiscally.

Three things will follow from this decision:

1. More people will be arrested (rightly and wrongly).
2. More students will be underserved.
3. More families and educators will be forced to leave Providence.

#3 is the thing that concerns me most of my entire comment today—because it's the most predictable and damning outcome of this policy. This move will leave Providence with fewer educated and educating people—today (teachers), in a decade (parents), and a generation from now (students). It is a mistake. And simply restoring school funding could prevent serious long-term harm.

More broadly, any city that raises its tax burden this way will see people leave. But in a city with the highest rents in the country? It won't be a trickle—it'll be a flood. Some will end up on the street. Others will be priced out of neighboring cities. Others still will leave the state entirely. That's bad for the economy—and worse for Providence.

Eventually, despite all efforts to protect large business interests, this ends in death by a thousand cuts. Maybe the working people of Providence can hold the city together for now—but what happens when a real crisis hits? A storm, tariffs, or any external shock—and the city has made itself dependent on a narrow set of interests who have the power to walk away.

And walk away they will. It'll be them (landlords, developers, multinational corporations) and us (a plot of land in between Boston and New York), and they will choose them. They'll leave.

They'll leave if their employees no longer want to live here. They'll leave if they see the city is no longer the front porch that's built all great businesses in our city. They'll leave if they see we can't shovel sidewalks, paint crosswalks, or even allow a bike lane to exist along the riverfront. And if those businesses still want to come here despite all that—maybe they aren't the kind we want to build around.

Please reject House Bill 6162. The people of Providence do not support this plan. We deserve better—and we'll keep fighting for it. The mayor acts like this bill is an inevitability, but it's only inevitable if you accept the school funding cuts and police department boost.

Sincerely,

Henry Perretta

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