

May 28, 2026

The Honorable Senator Louis P. DiPalma, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Rhode Island State Senate
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: SENATE RESOLUTION 2376 - RESOLUTION MAKING AN APPROPRIATION OF \$15,200,000 TO BE USED TO PURCHASE PFAS-FREE FIREFIGHTING GEAR

Chair DiPalma and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we respectfully submit this testimony regarding Senate Resolution 2376, which would appropriate \$15.2 million to assist Rhode Island municipalities with the purchase of PFAS-free protective gear for firefighters and rescue personnel.

We appreciate the sponsor's recognition of the significant health and safety concerns associated with long-term PFAS exposure and the unique occupational risks faced by firefighters and rescue personnel. Municipal fire departments and emergency service agencies across Rhode Island continue to prioritize firefighter safety, and emerging research regarding PFAS exposure has become an increasingly important issue for local governments.

As outlined in the resolution, firefighters and rescue personnel are routinely exposed to hazardous environments where PFAS-containing materials may be present, and concerns surrounding the use of PFAS in existing turnout gear have generated substantial discussion nationwide. Municipal leaders share the goal of reducing unnecessary occupational health risks wherever feasible while ensuring that emergency personnel continue to have access to effective, reliable, and compliant protective equipment.

There are also significant financial challenges associated with replacing turnout gear and protective equipment on a statewide basis. Firefighter protective gear represents a substantial municipal expense, particularly for communities managing constrained local budgets, aging equipment inventories, and increasing public safety costs. State assistance for these types of capital-intensive public safety investments can help municipalities address evolving safety standards without placing additional strain on local property taxpayers.

The League also encourages continued coordination among municipalities, fire service professionals, and other stakeholders to ensure any transition to PFAS-free protective gear is implemented in a practical manner that maintains all applicable safety and performance standards.

We appreciate the General Assembly's continued attention to firefighter health and safety issues and look forward to remaining engaged in discussions surrounding this proposal and broader efforts to support Rhode Island's municipal fire and rescue services.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

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

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of Senate Finance Committee