

March 12, 2026

The Honorable Jacob Bissaillon, Chair  
Senate Housing and Municipal Government  
Rhode Island Senate  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: SENATE BILL 2042 – AN ACT RELATING TO HIGHWAYS -- SIDEWALKS

Dear Chair Bissaillon and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we are writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 2042, a league priority piece of legislation. This bill seeks to shift the responsibility for maintenance of sidewalks along state highways, excluding snow and ice removal, from municipalities back to the state government where it originally resided. This legislation represents a long-overdue solution to an issue that has burdened our cities and towns for years, and we appreciate Senator Rogers' steadfast leadership in submitting this critical legislation on behalf of Rhode Island municipalities year after year.

Currently, municipalities are responsible for maintaining sidewalks adjacent to state highways, despite the fact that these thoroughfares are integral components of Rhode Island's transportation network. The cost and logistical challenges associated with sidewalk inspections, cleaning, repairs, and remediation of hazardous conditions have placed a significant strain on local budgets. Senate Bill 2042 acknowledges that sidewalk maintenance is a public safety priority and a core infrastructure responsibility that should be managed at the state level to ensure consistency, equity, and efficiency.

We urge support for this bill based on the following key considerations:

- **Equity and Consistency**: Placing sidewalk maintenance under state jurisdiction ensures a uniform standard of safety and upkeep across all Rhode Island communities. Municipalities with constrained budgets would no longer have to contend with disparities in sidewalk conditions due to financial limitations.
- **Public Safety**: Safe, well-maintained sidewalks are crucial for pedestrian access and mobility. By assigning this responsibility to the state, we can ensure that sidewalks along major state roadways receive the necessary attention and repairs, reducing hazards that pose risks to residents and visitors alike.
- **Financial Relief for Municipalities**: Transferring sidewalk maintenance responsibilities to the state alleviates a significant financial burden on local governments, allowing municipalities to redirect resources toward other essential services and infrastructure improvements.

- **Efficiency and Coordination**: A centralized approach to sidewalk maintenance enables more effective coordination, leveraging the state's expertise, resources, and economies of scale to address issues comprehensively and promptly. The RI Department of Transportation is better equipped to address sidewalk maintenance issues, given its resources, technical expertise, and existing responsibility for transportation infrastructure.

Senate Bill 2042 reflects a commitment to fostering safer, more accessible, and pedestrian-friendly communities. By relieving municipalities of this undue financial and logistical responsibility, Rhode Island can ensure that all sidewalks along state highways are maintained to a high standard, enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors statewide.

We respectfully urge the General Assembly to pass this long-debated and much-needed legislation in support of our cities and towns.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide any additional information or assistance in support of this bill.

Sincerely,



Randy R. Rossi  
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of Senate Housing and Municipal Government