



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State**  
Nellie M. Gorbea, *Secretary of State*

June 11, 2020

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chairman  
House Committee on Finance  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Abney:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing in support of House Resolution 8007 and to thank you for introducing on my behalf. The resolution outlines the terms of a lease agreement for the new State Archives location in Providence.

For some background, the Rhode Island State Archives holds over 17,000 cubic feet of permanent government records dating back to the founding years of the colony in the 1630s. Included in our collection are the following irreplaceable documents of national historic importance:

- **George Washington's Letter to the General Assembly announcing his retirement—April, 1797**
- **Original hand-written copy of the Bill of Rights—1789**
- **One of thirteen original signed copies Declaration of Independence—1776**
- **Rhode Island Act of Renunciation—May, 1776**
- **HMS Gaspee Commission Documents—1772**

Last year, we were notified by our current landlord that the second-floor tenant planned to expand to occupy the entire building in August 2020. This made it imperative that we find a suitable location to preserve the State's Archives and make them available for public viewing and research (per RI General Laws 42-8.1-5, 42-8.1-8 and 38-3-6). Based on this timing, we were scheduled to move out of our current location by the end of May.

Late last year, we commenced an open bid process that led to the selection of a new, larger and more appropriate space for the State Archives. In late January, we received State Properties Committee approval to enter into lease negotiations with Paolino Properties for the new facility located in downtown Providence. The new facility will include a larger, climate-controlled vault that meets archival storage standards to better protect the priceless collections held in the State Archives and to reduce our need to store as many of our collections at off-site locations.

The space will have larger and more contemporary exhibition, research, and meeting space to allow visitors to better experience our collections. Lastly, there will be a state-of-the art security system to better protect the State Archives many priceless historical documents.

Once we agreed to terms of the lease, we requested a resolution be introduced in accordance with section 37-6-2 of the General Laws. This section requires the State Properties Committee receive General Assembly approval to enter into a new agreement if the term of the lease is longer than five years and the aggregate rent more than \$500,000. House Resolution 8007 requests General Assembly approval of the lease terms so that we can present the final lease to the State Properties Committee to finalize the agreement.

The unforeseen impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused delays in the Archives relocation. Our new objective is to move into the new facility by the end of July so the incoming tenant for our location can begin their transition. For this reason, we are requesting approval of House Resolution 8007 for us to continue with the State Archives relocation.

As always, I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have regarding the Archives move. I thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this resolution and once again ask for your support.

Our past deserves a better future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nellie M. Gorbea". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and "G".

Nellie M. Gorbea  
Secretary of State

cc. House Finance Committee members  
Sharon Reynolds Ferland, House Fiscal Advisor