



February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024

The Honorable Representative Marvin L. Abney  
Chair of the House Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H7225, Support for Article 5 Question 3

Dear Chairman Abney,

I represent the membership of the Painters and Allied Trades of the state of Rhode Island. On behalf of the hundreds of finishing trades workers I am writing in support of Article 5 Question 3, which would, pending voter approval, provide much needed funding to build the housing that Rhode Islanders need. We thank Gov. McKee and Sec. Pryor for recognizing the seriousness of this crisis with their proposal to put a \$100 million bond on the ballot. We join housing advocates across Rhode Island in urging the legislature to increase that amount to \$150 million.

We must invest in a housing production strategy that meets the scale of a crisis that has pushed too many Rhode Islanders into homelessness and left so many more paying 30 and even 50-percent of their income on rent. How we spend the money matters, too. Solving this housing crisis will require multiple approaches, new tools, and leadership with open and innovative minds.

We urge the legislature to set aside funding for a new generation of mixed-income public housing development as well as direct funding to the state's public housing authorities to repair and expand their traditional public housing stock. This new publicly-owned housing should also create good-paying jobs for Rhode Island construction workers building green, zero-emissions buildings.

We strongly oppose any proposal to dedicate the housing bond to any single funding stream. Any proposal to unduly restrict housing funding to traditional channels will make it impossible to fund public housing authorities at the level required.

The current working conditions in the housing section of the construction industry are abysmal. Wage theft, unsafe conditions, employee misclassification, a lack of serious and effective workforce development are rampant across the industry. It is a sad state of affairs that we confront every day. We hold hope that a new way of building housing with a public developer model will serve as a leading edge to the industry to help change these conditions of hyper exploitation of workers building housing, as well as a shortage of workers who want to work in residential construction.

**International Union of Painters and Allied Trades  
District Council 11**

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To that end, New York University's Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy is currently conducting a study for the Department of Housing to explore the viability of various public housing development models from around the United States and the world. Sec. Pryor has made it clear that interim findings will be available in April or May so that they can inform the legislature's budgeting decisions, particularly with regard to the housing bond.

We are living in a time of severe housing crisis and of extraordinary innovation by public housing leaders in Montgomery County, Maryland, New York City, Atlanta, and Cambridge, Massachusetts. We urge you to dedicate substantial portions of this housing bond to a revolving fund that will finance new mixed-income public housing in addition to financing for traditional public housing rehabilitation and expansion.

Sincerely,

*Justin Kelley*

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