



February 29, 2024

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chairman
House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H 7225 Article 5, Question 3—Housing and Community Opportunity

Dear Chairman Abney and Committee Members:

On behalf of the more than 6,000 members of the Rhode Island Association of REALTORS® (RIAR), I thank you for affording our association the opportunity to comment on the above-referenced budget article.

RIAR and our members are committed to working with stakeholders, in both the private and public sectors, to create opportunities for people who seek access to housing that is affordable. Our association appreciates the investments that have been made recently that secures homeownership and rental opportunities for Rhode Islanders across our state. That is why our association is proud to support Governor McKee's proposal for further investment in housing through a \$100 million bond.

The housing bond proposal provides additional resources for housing development and homeownership opportunities. According to the National Association of REALTORS®, Rhode Island's real estate industry accounted for more than \$12 billion or 17 percent of the gross state product in 2022.¹ Moreover, the total economic impact of a home purchase in Rhode Island is \$124,500.

RIAR has always been a proud partner in closing the homeownership gap in Rhode Island. In fact, our association is a strong advocate for down payment assistance programs, which has proven successful recently. As a result of the last down payment assistance program, more than 1,300 Rhode Island households secured their first home last year, while creating new generational wealth for families. RIAR is confident that a new housing bond will expand that recent momentum and provide more families with homeownership opportunities.

¹ https://cdn.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/documents/2023-state-by-state-economic-impact-of-real-estate-activity-report-ri-05-01-2023.pdf?_gl=1*ok4dbi*_gcl_au*MjE0MDUzMzEzNS4xNzA5MjI4MTMw

Additionally, the affordable housing bond will assist our state in meeting its rental housing needs and help developers build more housing that is affordable for local families. According to the HousingWorksRI Fact Book, there are only five municipalities in Rhode Island meeting the state's mandated 10 percent housing affordability benchmark.² Through targeted investments of a new bond, cities and towns across Rhode Island will benefit from new housing options. RIAR is confident that a \$100 million investment will assist communities in overcoming their housing challenges by creating new opportunities for low- and middle-income families, veterans, senior citizens, and individuals with disabilities.

Our members appreciate the leadership of Governor McKee, members of the General Assembly and the House Commission to Study Housing Affordability. We urge this committee to act favorably on the proposal and support a \$100 million bond referendum to be voted on by Rhode Island's electorate in the 2024 statewide general election. It is our sincere hope that this measure will improve housing resource allocations, benefit Rhode Island neighborhoods and arm developers with the necessary tools to meet Rhode Island's housing goals.

Sincerely,



Philip Tedesco, RCE, CAE, CIPS
Chief Executive Officer
Rhode Island Association of REALTORS®

² <https://d337wih8hx5yft.cloudfront.net/documents/Housing-Fact-Books/2023HFB.pdf>