



February 10, 2026

Hon. Marvin Abney
Chair
House Committee on Finance
State House
Providence, RI 02903
HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov

Re: Article 6 of the Governor's Budget: Capital Development Program -- Question 2 Housing and Home Ownership

Dear Chair Abney,

BuildRI is a domestic non-profit trade association comprised of four (4) contractor associations (the Labor Relations Division of the RI Chapter of the Associated General Contractors, the New England Mechanical Contractors' Ass'n, the RI Mason Contractors' Ass'n, and the RI and Southeast MA Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors' Ass'n), and seventeen (17) Local Trade Unions comprised of approximately 10,000 local tradesmen and women. On behalf of our organization, I writing with concerns regarding the above referred to provisions in the Governor's proposed budget for the reasons that follow.

The Governor and the General Assembly have taken notable steps to address Rhode Island's housing crisis. From easing zoning and permitting requirements to committing hundreds of millions of dollars to spur development. Once again, this year's proposed budget prioritizes increasing housing production. These efforts acknowledge a clear reality: housing affordability is a crisis affecting every community in Rhode Island.

According to HousingWorks RI's annual report, renters earning the state's median income cannot afford market-rate housing in any city or town. The average home price has reached \$485,345, requiring an annual household income of roughly \$150,000 to afford a monthly mortgage. Yet the average household income in Rhode Island, as reported by WPRI in February 2025, is approximately \$85,000. This gap makes clear that the current housing market is failing working families.

While increasing housing supply is necessary, it is not sufficient. Housing has become unaffordable not only because of limited supply, but also because wages have failed to keep pace with rising costs. Too often, housing development is pursued in ways that undercut the very workers responsible for building it. Rhode Island cannot solve its housing crisis at the expenses of the skill men and women of the construction industry.

The men and women of the Rhode Island Building and Construction Trades have built thousands of housing units across the state in recent years and are prepared to build thousands more, including major developments in the I-195 Redevelopment District. These workers are highly skilled, live in the communities they build, and deserve jobs that provide family-sustaining wages, healthcare, and retirement security.

For these reasons, Build Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Building and Construction Trades Council, and the four construction management associations cannot support the proposed housing bond as written. The proposal lacks basic labor standards that ensure taxpayer-funded projects provide fair wages and benefits.

This housing bond relies on public dollars to subsidize private development. Any project receiving funding through this bond must be required to comply with RIGL 37-13, Rhode Island's Prevailing Wage Law. Prevailing wage standards ensure housing is built responsibly, safely, and affordably, while allowing construction workers to earn a middle-class living. Taxpayer-funded housing should not come at the expense of Rhode Island workers.

If the state is serious about addressing housing affordability, it must be equally serious about protecting wages and labor standards. Anything less undermines both working families and the long-term sustainability of our housing goals. We respectfully ask the House Finance Committee to include prevailing wage compliance, as well as adopting responsible contracting language into these bond funds.

Sincerely,



Anthony J. Cherry
Assistant Executive Director
Build Rhode Island