



**Testimony Re: House Bill 7127, Article 6: Capital Development Program,
Question 2, Housing and Homeownership
House Finance Committee
February 10, 2026
Stephanie Geller, Deputy Director**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports Article 6, Question 2 in the Governor's proposed budget. This question would provide for a bond referendum which would authorize the issuance of a \$120 million Housing and Home Ownership Bond to increase and preserve the availability of affordable and accessible housing to meet the needs of all Rhode Islanders and support community revitalization through the redevelopment of existing structures, new construction, property acquisition, and infrastructure improvements, with at least \$25 million allocated towards increasing production of housing intended for homeownership.

In 2024, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Rhode Island (including utilities) was \$2,316 per month. A worker would have to earn \$44.54 an hour and work 40 hours a week year-round to be able to afford this rent without a cost burden. In 2024, this hourly wage was more than three times the state's 2024 minimum wage of \$14.00 per hour.

State officials have set a goal of 15,000 new homes permitted by 2030 to begin easing the housing crisis. We cannot let our foot off the pedal now when more housing is still needed to meet the need, especially among households with very low incomes. With jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and affordable housing both in short supply in Rhode Island, many low-income families must choose between paying their rent and meeting their families' other basic needs, so they skimp on food, compromising their children's health and development, and in the worst cases, families are forced into homelessness. **In 2024, 479 families with 951 children stayed at an emergency shelter, domestic violence shelter, transitional housing program, or hotel paid for by DCYF in Rhode Island. And as of January 21, 2025, 95 families with 100 children reported that they had slept outside for at least one night in the previous month.**

All children need a safe, affordable, stable home in which to eat, sleep, play and grow and increasing the availability of affordable housing across the state will help meet this need.

We urge the Committee to support this budget article and question (Article 6, Question 2) and **consider increasing the proposed amount to \$150 million** to produce and preserve affordable homes for low and moderate income Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for the leadership the General Assembly has shown in addressing the housing crisis in our state and for the opportunity to provide this testimony.