



April 14, 2026

Honorable Chair and Members
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Written Testimony in Support of H 8316 Making an Appropriation of \$150,000 to the Main Street Rhode Island Program

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Planning Association, I write in strong support of H 8316, which would appropriate \$150,000 to continue the Main Street Rhode Island program in FY 2027. As planners working in communities across the state, we see this as a practical and high-value investment in Rhode Island's downtowns and village centers.

Main Street districts are some of Rhode Island's most important economic assets. They are places where infrastructure already exists, where small businesses can grow incrementally, and where compact, walkable development can strengthen both community life and local tax base productivity. Programs that help communities improve these districts are not simply beautification efforts; they are smart economic development and placemaking tools.

Main Street Rhode Island is already demonstrating that value. In its first year, the program built a statewide network, connected Rhode Island to Main Street America, engaged 28 of 39 municipalities, and supported a first round of district cohorts moving from strategy to implementation. H 8316 notes that eleven district cohorts have formed in ten cities and towns in the program's first year. That is meaningful early momentum and a strong indication that communities are ready to use this assistance well.

From RIAPA's perspective, the program's strength is that it builds local capacity. It helps municipal leaders, planners, business advocates, and community partners work together on tangible, place-based improvements. That kind of coordination is difficult for any one municipality to create on its own, but it is essential for long-term revitalization.

We respectfully urge the Committee to approve H 8316 and continue this investment in Main Street Rhode Island.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sean Henry and Gregory Guertin
Legislative Committee Co-Chairs
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