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Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House, 82 Smith Street, Providence RI 02903
Re: Support for H7803 – State Funded Rental Subsidy Program

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the Committee,

My name is Bernie Beaudreau and I live in Rumford, RI. I am retired and currently a community volunteer and advocate for the homeless. I have spent my 45-year career providing services and advocating for better incomes for the poorest people seeking freedom from hunger and homelessness.

For the past 18 months I have reached out to dozens of homeless individuals – in shelters, on the streets and in tent encampments -- working with them to improve their living situations. This past winter some friends and I raised funds and distributed 106 twenty-pound tanks of propane for heating and cooking to ten encampments in Pawtucket, East Providence and Providence, helping folks protect themselves from the deadly cold snaps and snow storms.

I have felt their suffering and have heard their many stories of how they became homeless. I have heard about their tough breaks, mistaken paths and struggles to survive. I have heard their dreams of having a simple apartment with heat, water, a bathroom and a place to cook their meals and be clean, nothing more.

It is time to give folks a meaningful break and show them the kindness of an even more generous and caring community. I believe Rhode Island's tax payers will be willing to help if they can take some time to know and feel the hardship of the homeless. Informing the community of the reality of homelessness is important for creating good will and the support for greater public action. That's why I have collected, written and distributed stories of the homeless in recent months. I have compiled the stories into one document and shared it with every member of the House and Senate. I hope it has helped create greater understanding and empathy.

I know very personally how vitally important it is that we commit additional resources to assist many thousands of our lowest income and homeless families and individuals to secure simple, safe and affordable housing. My own upbringing taught me how a factory worker/sign painter and an office secretary can work endlessly to keep their eight kids with a roof over their heads and still not make ends meet. Thanks to family and friends who helped, we got through the tough times.

This \$25 million appropriation for state-funded rental subsidy H-7803 would help create housing pathways out of homelessness for Rhode Islanders with the greatest needs. It would leverage federal resources, support long-term housing stability, protect public resources by reducing costly reliance on emergency shelters, hospitals, crisis systems, and corrections and strengthen Rhode Island’s housing delivery system by making more housing developments financially feasible for vulnerable populations.

By my own calculations, based on numbers I have garnered from recent testimony of housing experts and developers, \$25 million could result in about 300 to 400 deeply subsidized housing units, depending on life of the project. By the calculations presented below, a state subsidy of \$75,000 would provide an apartment for 12.5 years. This assumes an average monthly rent payment of \$250, well within the reach of most very low-income households. In my view, this compares very well to other low-income housing developments and appears to be very reasonable.

| Estimated Impact of \$25 million in rental subsidies to provide affordable housing (using cost and rent numbers suggested in recent testimony) | | | | | |
|---|--|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| | | \$ per year | 10 years | 15 years | 12.5 years (avg) |
| Operating Costs | | 9,000 | 90,000 | 135,000 | 112,500 |
| Rent Payment @ 250/mnth | | 3,000 | 30,000 | 45,000 | 37,500 |
| Subsidy | | 6,000 | 60,000 | 90,000 | 75,000 |
| TOTAL State Grant | | | 25,000,000 | 25,000,000 | 25,000,000 |
| # of units produced with grant | | | 417 | 278 | 333 |
| Average state grant per unit | | | 60,000 | 90,000 | 75,000 |

Please pass H7803 – State Funded Rental Subsidy. It will make a significant contribution to addressing the need for affordable housing. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony for your consideration.