Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness

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April 27, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
82 Smith Street, Room 35
Providence, RI, 02903

Re: Support for H7803 – State Funded Rental Subsidy Program

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness, I am writing to express our strong support for House Bill H7803, which establishes a state-funded rental subsidy program.

H7803 represents a critical and timely investment in Rhode Island's housing stability infrastructure. At its core, this legislation addresses the root cause of homelessness: a lack of housing that is affordable to the lowest-income residents.

Across Rhode Island, extremely low-income households, those earning less than 30% of Area Median Income - cannot afford available apartments without additional support. For a single individual, this represents an income of less than $24,000 per year. With average rents for a one-bedroom apartment exceeding $1,400, this creates a gap that is impossible to bridge.

H7803 directly addresses this affordability gap by establishing a state-funded rental subsidy program that bridges what households can afford and the actual cost of housing. This is one of the most effective and evidence-based strategies available to both prevent homelessness and support long-term housing stability.

This legislation also strengthens and maximizes existing investments in housing production. Federal programs - alongside state and private funding - are already supporting the development and preservation of affordable housing. However, without operating subsidies, many of these units remain out of reach for the lowest-income households. A state-funded rental subsidy ensures that these investments are fully realized and accessible to those who need them most.

Importantly, H7803 reduces reliance on increasingly uncertain federal housing resources. Currently, only about one in four households who qualify for federal rental assistance actually receive it. Establishing a state-level subsidy program provides a more reliable and consistent source of support for Rhode Islanders experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

From a fiscal perspective, this is also a cost-effective investment. Providing stable housing is significantly less expensive than reliance on emergency shelters, hospital systems, and crisis services. By stabilizing households earlier, we reduce long-term public costs and alleviate pressure on already strained systems.

This program appropriately prioritizes Rhode Islanders with the greatest need - those experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk, particularly individuals with disabilities and those facing long-term barriers to housing stability.

At a time when housing affordability remains one of the most pressing challenges facing our state, H7803 reflects a thoughtful, strategic, and necessary policy response.

We respectfully urge the Committee to support and advance this important legislation.

Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to addressing housing instability and homelessness in Rhode Island. With your support, we can ensure that all Rhode Islanders have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing.

Respectfully submitted,

Executive Director
Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness