



April 29, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

Re: In support of H-8208

Dear Chair Abney and members of the Committee:

I write to express South County Habitat for Humanity's strong support for House Resolution 8208, a proposed \$200,000 appropriation to the Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI) to strengthen community development capacity and improve coordination across the housing and homelessness response system.

South County Habitat for Humanity is an affordable housing developer in Washington County. We partner with volunteers, community members, and the homeowners themselves to build units for affordable homeownership. Since January 2026 we have had over 80 Rhode Island residents reach out to inquire about these opportunities.

Under House leadership, Rhode Island has taken meaningful and commendable steps in recent years to address the housing crisis, including investments in affordable housing production, policy reforms to reduce barriers to development, and a growing focus on homelessness prevention. These efforts reflect the strong commitment of policymakers and have helped lay an important foundation for progress.

At the same time, Rhode Island continues to face significant housing challenges. The nonprofit housing and homelessness sectors are working every day to respond to the real-life impacts of housing affordability and supply challenges. Reductions in federal funding and uncertainty about the future of certain critical housing programs are straining the capacity of nonprofits who are already working in a complex and demanding environment.

HNRI has a strong track record of advancing collaborative, statewide solutions. For more than three decades, we have supported nonprofit community development organizations, convened cross-sector partners, and helped advance policies and investments that expand access to affordable homes. Through our affiliated nonprofit, the Community Housing Land Trust of Rhode Island, we also provide technical assistance, training, and educational resources to local stakeholders, helping organizations, municipalities, and partners build the knowledge and capacity needed to effectively develop, preserve, and support affordable housing.

We deeply value our partnership with HNRI, and feel that the only way to address the housing crisis in RI is through collaboration with partner agencies and organizations.

This appropriation represents a strategic investment in the systems and organizations needed to meet the current moment. By strengthening coordination, supporting capacity-building, and improving information sharing and communication, this appropriation will help advance efforts



to reduce fragmentation, improve efficiency, and ultimately impact low- and moderate-income Rhode Islanders seeking safe, healthy, and affordable homes.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support this appropriation. It is a modest investment with the potential for significant statewide impact—strengthening organizations, improving system performance, and helping more Rhode Islanders access and maintain stable housing.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to addressing Rhode Island's housing challenges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Aliyya DeMartino".

Aliyya DeMartino
Homeowner Services Coordinator
South County Habitat for Humanity
Charlestown, RI