



861A Broad Street, Providence, RI 02907 | 401-941-2900

April 16, 2026

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

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the Committee:

I write to express Women's Development Corporation's strong support for the H8208, 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.

In my role as Director of Real Estate Development at Women's Development Corporation, I am directly involved in the development and operation of affordable and supportive housing across Rhode Island. Since 1979, WDC has developed over 700 units of affordable housing, all of which we continue to operate. Additionally we provide third-party management service for a number of properties serving special populations. I also bring additional experience working with this population through my role as Chair of the Rhode Island Continuum of Care.

Under your 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.

As a member of the Housing Network, we have directly benefited from its strong advocacy on behalf of the nonprofit housing sector, as well as its role in supporting the growth and sustainability of our industry. HNRI consistently creates opportunities for information sharing, peer learning, and collaboration, which have been critical in helping organizations like ours navigate an increasingly complex development and operating environment.



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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.

From our vantage point, investments in coordination and capacity-building are essential to advancing affordable housing and homelessness response efforts. Housing development and operations require alignment across multiple partners, funding sources, and systems, and organizations are often operating with limited capacity in a complex environment. Strengthening coordination and creating opportunities for shared learning helps ensure that resources are used effectively, reduces fragmentation, and ultimately leads to better outcomes for the individuals and families we serve.

I respectfully urge the General Assembly 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,

Charlie Thomas-Davison
Director of Real Estate Development
Women's Development Corporation