



The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi  
House Speaker, Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

Dear Speaker Shekarchi:

I write to express South County Habitat for Humanity strong support for the 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. As a founding member of the Housing Network, we have seen the impact it has had across our State for many years, and only see the need for such coordinated work growing as the challenges around housing increase

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. Working alongside the Housing Network team has been a pleasure. Their expertise and passion to support not just the members but all Rhode Islanders in need of housing is evident. Whenever we have a new project, challenge with zoning, ideas for legislation or just need to talk through an issue, they are always available and always willing to join in on the effort to get a housing project from an idea to occupancy.

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.

The housing challenge in Rhode Island is vast, and complex. The only way to make progress is to work together and to make sure that expertise is available to all. The Housing Network provides that centralized hub that will allow us all to rise to the challenge. It helps ensure continuity of information and a resource that, if lost, would be detrimental to all of our efforts.

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,



Colin Penney  
Executive Director, South County Habitat for Humanity  
Charlestown RI