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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 Honorable Members of the Committee,

One year ago, I was living in a tent. Today, I stand before you as an advocate, a survivor, and a

grateful Rhode Islander. Forty-four years ago, I received an HIV-positive diagnosis—and throughout those decades, I have faced illness, stigma, and uncertainty. While unhoused last

winter, I was treated for spinal lesions in our state's hospitals. That experience taught me the

true meaning of vulnerability and the power of compassion in our communities.

In the past year, I moved into a motel shelter and then into a cooperative apartment program—

stepping stones on my journey to safe, stable housing. Yet even these vital supports come with

a heavy price tag, consuming seventy percent of my fixed income as I wait for an opening in senior housing. Like so many Rhode Islanders, I am caught between gratitude for a roof over

my head and the struggle to keep it.

H7803 – State Funded Rental Subsidy Program addresses the very issue I face today and is the situation bringing myself and many Rhode Islanders too close to being unhoused and homeless.

This winter I served served on the front lines of our overnight warming shelter, a collaboration between

the State of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Council of Churches. Every night, I witnessed the

courage of my neighbors who refuse to give up hope. Their perseverance—and my own—fuels

my next mission: securing more permanent, financially sustainable housing for every Rhode

Islander.

I want to thank you, our lawmakers, for your tireless work to combat homelessness and expand

affordable housing. Your leadership has saved lives and restored dignity. But our work is not done. I look forward to partnering with you—bringing the voices of people with lived experience

into every conversation—so that together we can build a future where no one in Rhode Island

has to choose between health and a home.

Thank you for your commitment, your compassion, and your belief that every person deserves a

place to call home.

Sincerely,

Donald King

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