



April 13, 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 the Housing Authority of Newport's 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. The Housing Authority serves more than 1200 families and has nearly 17,000 applicants on its waiting list for housing assistance therefore these funds will allow for an improved service delivery system from our RI agencies.

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, they have supported nonprofit community development organizations, convened cross-sector partners, and helped advance policies and investments that expand access to affordable homes. Through their affiliated nonprofit, the Community Housing Land Trust of Rhode Island, they 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. HNRI's work has been invaluable in securing housing bond funds that have allowed our agency to preserve more than 200 desperately needed homes in Newport that are affordable to lower income seniors, the disabled, and families with children.

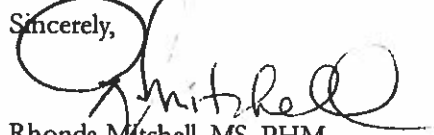
This appropriation represents a strategic investment in the systems and organizations needed to meet the current moment. By strengthening coordination, supporting capacity-building, and improving information sharing and communication, this appropriation will help advance efforts to reduce fragmentation, improve efficiency, and ultimately impact low- and moderate-income Rhode Islanders seeking safe, healthy, and affordable homes.

As a stakeholder I recognize the benefits of the coordination and capacity-building provided by HNRI, including how critical it is to ensuring that affordable housing initiatives work at scale and improve not just the number of homes built—but also their quality, sustainability, and impact on communities.

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 black ink, appearing to read "Rhonda Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Rhonda Mitchell, MS, PHM
Executive Director
The Housing Authority of Newport

CC: Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi, House Speaker
Lynne Urbani, Director of Policy, Office of the Speaker