



May 6, 2026

To: The Honorable Marvin Abney and Members, House Finance Committee
From: Carol Costa, SACRI Executive Director; Maureen Maigret, Policy Advisor
Re: Support for H7700, An Act Relating to Taxation -- Property Tax Relief

SACRI, a non-profit organization, works to amplify the voices of older adults and to improve their quality of life which includes their economic security. Older adults tell us that housing costs are one of their biggest concerns. We thank Representative Cotter and co-sponsors Spears, Speakman, McGaw, Kennedy, Kazarian, and Tanzi for recognizing that increasing the income limits and credits or refunds for the state Property Tax Relief Law is one way to bring a bit of relief to the crushing housing cost burden faced by many lower- and middle-income older Rhode Islanders and persons with disabilities on Social Security Disability.

H7700 is part of SACRI's 7-point 2026 Affordability Agenda for RI Older Adults

Affordable housing options are essential for older adults to live at home where most prefer to live. Rapidly rising housing costs and rents burden many older adults especially those living mostly on fixed incomes. One out of four older homeowners are cost-burdened paying 30% or more on housing costs as are half of older renters. Wallet Hub reports that RI's property tax is 13th highest in the nation contributing to this housing cost burden. A Wallet Hub study found property taxes on a RI home with a median value of \$404,200 would be \$4,900 (2024 values).

The state Property Tax Relief law was enacted in 1977 with an upper income of \$25,000 to bring relief to low-income older adults and persons with disabilities who rent or own their home. The law provides a state tax credit (or refund), for older persons and persons on SSDI. Refunds are calculated based on 20% of rent paid in cash up to the credit/refund cap. In 2022, through SACRI's advocacy, the legislature increased the income to \$35,000 and the credit/refund cap to \$600 with an annual inflation adjustment for both. In 2025, the inflation adjustment brings the income to \$40,730 and the cap to \$700. In tax year 2025, 11238 filers received the credit with an average credit of \$576 (REC 5/4/2026).

H7700 raises the income cap to \$50,000 and increases the maximum credit to \$850. While the law provides for annual CPI-U adjustments that measure fails to reflect the significant upward trends in the state's real estate market. Cost of an average RI single family home hovers around \$500,000 (realtors.org). Average rents range from \$1,828 to \$2,178 (rent café) with Providence having more aggressive rent increases. As communities reevaluate real estate many persons may see an increase in their property tax bills. For older households with income less than \$50,000 this bill would increase the refund/credit to up to \$850. This might sound like much but for an older person or one on SSDI, that could pay for two weeks of groceries. Massachusetts has raised its income eligibility to \$112,000 for a couple filing jointly with a maximum credit of \$2,820. You are considering millions of dollars to build, renovate and preserve desperately needed affordable housing. However, these efforts will take time. Passing this bill will provide more immediate and welcome fiscal relief. We urge you to recommend passage of the bill. Thank you for your consideration.