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State Legislative Affairs- Chairman

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Urban Redevelopment Renewal & Planning

May 21, 2026

Chairman Abney and Honorable Members
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H 8528 and H 8529

Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee:

I write in strong support of H 8528 and H 8529 relating to the continued development, governance and long-term success of the I-195 Redevelopment District and associated economic development initiatives.

As the Providence City Councilman representing Ward 1, home to the I-195 District, The Jewelry District and Downtown and as Chairman of the Providence City Council Committee on State Legislative Affairs, I understand firsthand the critical importance of these investments and governance improvements not only for the City of Providence but for the economic future of the entire State of Rhode Island. I am also proud to share representation of much of this district alongside my friend and partner in government Speaker Christopher Blazewski, who has long understood the transformative importance of the I-195 land for Providence and Rhode Island's future.

The I-195 District remains one of the most transformative economic development opportunities in Rhode Island. Over the last several years, the district has emerged as a center for innovation, housing, research, entrepreneurship, public space activation and life sciences investment. Continued strategic investment is essential to maintaining this momentum and ensuring the district reaches its full potential as a driver of jobs, tax revenue, housing growth and long-term economic competitiveness.

The success of the I-195 Redevelopment District Commission can already be seen throughout Providence. What was once underutilized highway land has been transformed into a thriving mixed-use district that has helped revitalize our city's waterfront, attract private investment and create new destinations for residents and visitors alike. Major projects including the Trader Joe's development on Parcel 6, the Cambridge Innovation Center (CIC) at Point225, the continued development of Parcel 9 mixed-income housing, the 195 District Park Pavilion anchored by The Guild and Seven Stars Bakery, the new Rhode Island State Health Laboratory and life sciences complex at 150 Richmond Street, Brown University's research laboratories, Ocean State Labs biotech incubator space, the Aloft Hotel, Emblem 125, Chestnut Commons and ongoing mixed-use residential and commercial projects have fundamentally reshaped this area into one of the most vibrant economic engines in the state.

The Commission's work has also helped strengthen public infrastructure and civic life through investments surrounding the Michael S. Van Leesten Memorial Bridge, the Providence Riverwalk extension, District Park programming, pedestrian connectivity and new opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurship. Today, the district supports millions of square feet of development either completed, underway, or planned, approximately 1,000 housing units built or in the pipeline, hundreds of events annually and millions of visits to district parks and public spaces.

I especially want to recognize Executive Director Caroline Skuncik, Chairman Marc Crisafulli and the entire I-195 District Commission team for their leadership, professionalism and long-term vision in helping move these transformative projects forward while positioning Providence and Rhode Island for sustained economic growth. Quite frankly, there has not been an economic development agency in Rhode Island that has moved with the pace, urgency and execution of the I-195 District Commission in delivering meaningful projects and attracting investment. Under Caroline and Chairman Crisafulli's leadership, the Commission has continued building momentum around housing, innovation, life sciences, entrepreneurship and public space activation that will benefit Rhode Island for generations to come.

H 8528 provides important clarity and specificity regarding the proposed 2026 economic development bond allocations, including \$35 million dedicated to I-195 District site readiness improvements. Investments in land assembly, environmental remediation, utility infrastructure and site preparation are foundational to unlocking future private development opportunities and ensuring the district remains competitive in attracting major employers, institutional investment and mixed-use development, with hundreds of units of housing in the pipeline due to the leadership of Additionally, the bill's investments in Quonset infrastructure, the Rhode Island Life Science Hub and broader economic

development infrastructure represent a coordinated statewide strategy to strengthen Rhode Island's innovation economy and position our state for long-term growth.

H 8529 also provides thoughtful and necessary governance updates to strengthen collaboration between the I-195 Redevelopment District Commission and the Rhode Island Life Science Hub. Improved coordination between these entities is critical as Rhode Island continues building a stronger life sciences and innovation ecosystem.

I am also supportive of provisions that clarify zoning authority, extend the Commission's sunset to 2039 and allow for the creation of a nonprofit entity to support district parks and public spaces. The parks and public realm improvements within the I-195 District have become some of Providence's most active and beloved civic assets, helping to attract residents, visitors, businesses and cultural programming to the area.

As Chairman of State Legislative Affairs, I value our partnership with the State House and strongly believe that sustained state and local coordination is essential if Providence and Rhode Island are to remain economically competitive, attract new investment, grow our tax base and create opportunities for residents across our communities.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Rhode Island's economic future.

Sincerely,



Senior Deputy Majority Leader
Providence City Council, Councilman – Ward 1
Chairman, State Legislative Affairs
Chairman, Claims and Pending Suits
Chairman, Public Property