

Chris O'Brien

From: Jordan Goyette <goyettejordan@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, February 14, 2022 8:45 PM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Testimony on Article 1-Section 16

Dear Chairman Abney & members of the Finance committee,

While there are many laudable investments included in this section of the Governor's proposal for spending the remaining SFR funding such as the \$10 million for the Minority Business Accelerator investment, and it is clear that Rhode Island small businesses do need continued support to build upon the positives that have come out of the pandemic like the take it outside program, it is beginning to feel like the business/tourism lobby continues to have a special relationship with this Governor's priorities. At the very least, this committee should also include narrow language for this direct business assistance funding and other funds like it did for the Rebounds proposal, applying the assistance only for businesses who reported up to a \$1 million in annual net income and those who demonstrated a negative impact to their business from the pandemic. \$5 million for Main Streets revitalization is also a worthy investment, but infrastructure proposals like this should be put to the voters in the form of bonding, just like the Green Economy, school construction and higher educational measures put forward by the Governor this year to go on the ballot have to be authorized by all of us. Ultimately in addition to the over \$140 million from previous federal relief bills allocated for small business relief, followed by the \$45 million passed by the assembly in the Rebounds proposal, the total share of relief funding gone towards one time economic development proposals and business relief nearly tops \$350 million. When factoring in many of the other one-time economic development proposals the Governor recommends, that number swells much closer to \$500 million. Obviously there are many competing demands for this funding and many of these economic development proposals by the Governor are needed to build upon a strong recovery. There is a limited pool of funding ultimately for the many needs affecting the crises in housing, childcare and healthcare. However its telling that we are putting more towards tourism promotion than we are towards efforts to end homelessness, or substance abuse assistance. The RIF/RIPEC/EPI recommendations proposed \$400 million for housing efforts. The Governor went with \$250 million. For behavioral healthcare services they recommended \$250 million, and instead he threw them a mere \$42 million. Unfortunately all too often the needs of the Chamber, the RIBC and the Tourism/Hospitality lobby heavily outweigh the needs of the unhoused or mentally ill. I hope you will consider adjusting some of these allocations accordingly to reflect priorities that demonstrate otherwise.

Thank You,

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