



October 28, 2021

Honorable Representative Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: Support for Governor's Supplemental Request to Amend FY22 Appropriations Act

Dear Chair Abney and House Finance Committee Members:

We are a multi-sector coalition of organizations writing in strong support of Governor McKee's Supplemental Request to Amend the FY22 Appropriations Act, including a \$29.5 million initial investment in housing affordability and security with American Rescue Plan (ARP) State Fiscal Recovery Funds. We appreciate the Governor's request to invest ten percent of ARP funds in affordable homes, child care, small businesses, and expanding broadband access. Investing in these inter-connected sectors now is critical to Rhode Islanders' economic recovery.

As we know, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated housing insecurity, especially for low-income families and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. According to the RI Coalition to End Homelessness, over the past month, nearly 600 people were sleeping outdoors or in places not fit for human habitation. Our rental vacancy rate is the lowest it has been in a long time, around two percent. For the past several years, data from HousingWorks RI have shown over one third of Rhode Island households – approximately 140,000 – are cost-burdened. Our lowest-paid workers, many of whom have been deemed "essential" during the pandemic, must work at least 80 hours every week, 52 weeks a year (the equivalent of two full-time 40/hour week jobs with no days off all year long), to afford a moderately priced apartment at fair-market rent. The sooner funds for housing are deployed, the sooner these conditions Rhode Islanders are experiencing can be addressed.

The Governor's housing proposal includes funds for development and preservation (\$15M) and site acquisition (\$12M) for affordable homes, housing stability services (\$1.5M), administrative staffing at the Office of Housing and Community Development (\$500K), and broadband expansion (\$500K). This represents an important step in meeting the housing needs of constituents. However, decades of disinvestment in the production of affordable homes and supportive and operational services necessary for people to remain stably housed have put our state in a position where a substantial, catalytic investment is needed.

We have an opportunity to make this generational down-payment on Rhode Island's future with an additional investment of \$525 million of ARP funds. We have proposed \$25M for immediate,

Homes RI is a coalition of organizations working together to increase and preserve the supply of safe, healthy, and affordable homes throughout Rhode Island.

emergency needs for those experiencing homelessness and currently unsheltered or living in places not fit for human habitation; and \$500M to produce, preserve, and protect 2,500 affordable homes by 2030 (\$350 million), promote housing access and stability (\$60 million), and support communities to address issues associated with aging housing stock (\$90 million), to advance longer-term housing needs. We recently shared this proposal in a letter dated October 19, 2021 to Governor McKee and General Assembly leadership.

We realize that there is a difficult task ahead for state leaders in equitably allocating such a large amount of funds for connected priorities to benefit Rhode Islanders. In closing, we reiterate strong support for the Governor's Supplemental Request to Amend FY22 Appropriations Act and \$29.5 million for housing affordability, security, and broadband that is under consideration at today's hearing.

We urge the Committee to support this request and to please consider the need to allocate additional funds for safe, healthy, and affordable homes and housing stability as you make decisions in the coming months.

Respectfully,

Amos House	Barbara Sokoloff Associates
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of RI	The Center for Health and Justice Transformation
Childhood Lead Action Project	Church Community Housing Corporation
Community Care Alliance	Community Housing Land Trust of RI
Councilwoman Nirva LaFortune	Crossroads Rhode Island
Direct Action for Rights & Equality (DARE)	Dunamis Synergy at WEHCD
Economic Progress Institute	Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center
Feinstein Institute for Public Service at PC	George Wiley Center
Habitat for Humanity of RI – Greater Prov.	House of Hope CDC
Housing Network of Rhode Island	HOPE at Brown University
HousingWorks RI at RWU	Jonnycake Center for Hope
Lucy's Hearth	McAuley Ministries
McKinney Cooperative Shelter	
MLPB, a fiscally sponsored program of TSNE MissionWorks	
NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley	Newport Partnership for Families
Newport Working Cities Collaborative	Ocean State Center for Independent Living
Omni Development Corporation	ONE Neighborhood Builders
Pawtucket Central Falls Development	The Pawtucket Foundation
Pawtucket Housing Authority	Pawtucket Housing, Inc.
Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH)	Project Weber/RENEW

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition RI	Providence Preservation Society
RI Center for Justice	RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence
RI Coalition to End Homelessness	RI Community Action Association
RI Developmental Disabilities Council	RI Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty
RI KIDS COUNT	Right from the Start Campaign
Smith Hill CDC	Sojourner House
South County Habitat for Humanity	SWAP, Inc.
United Way of Rhode Island	Washington County CDC
Westbay Community Action	West Broadway Neighborhood Association
West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation	
Women's Development Corporation	Women's Fund of Rhode Island
Women's Resource Center	YWCA Rhode Island