

Written Testimony in Support of H 5299

Chairperson and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in support of **House Bill 5299**, introduced by Representative Joseph M. McNamara, which directs Rhode Island Housing to work with the Infrastructure Bank and other appropriate public and private entities to assist homeowners' associations in the purchase of leased land under the right of first refusal.

Many Rhode Island residents, particularly in communities with long-standing lease agreements, face the risk of displacement when leased land is sold to outside corporate entities. Despite having the right of first refusal, homeowners' associations – made up of community volunteers, with limited resource and expertise and no staff - often struggle to navigate the legal and financial barriers that make it difficult to secure ownership of the leased land provided for in this chapter. **H 5299 directly addresses this issue by directing Rhode Island Housing, the Infrastructure Bank and other appropriate public and private entities to investigate and remove obstacles that prevent homeowners from exercising their right of first refusal.**

By passing this bill, the General Assembly will ensure that homeowners in communities like ours can remain in their homes, protect affordable housing, assist aging population to age in place, retain the character of our communities, and prevent the uncertainty and financial hardship that often accompany land sales to outside investors. Homeownership should provide stability, not uncertainty. **This legislation aligns with Rhode Island's broader efforts to promote housing security and sustainable homeownership.**

I urge the committee to support H 5299 and take this meaningful step to protect homeowners and their communities. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Danielle Giles