

Ariana Costa

From: Vicki Martin <vmartin@Burrillville.org>
Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 9:17 AM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Cc: Rep. Place, David J.; Brian Newberry; Sen. de la Cruz, Jessica
Subject: Opposition to House Bill 2026 - H 7551
Attachments: H7551.pdf

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee, Chair
House Judiciary Committee

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

While the intent of House Bill 2026 – H 7551, to combat real estate title fraud, is laudable, the legislation introduces significant concerns that outweigh its potential benefits and could negatively impact municipalities, property owners, and the real estate market in Rhode Island.

The definition of “suspicious document” is vague and grants recorders broad discretion to delay filings. Criteria such as documents that “do not conform to recording standards” or are “materially false” could be subjectively interpreted, leading to inconsistent application and potential abuse of authority. This legislation authorizes municipal recorders to “temporarily delay a suspicious document.” While intended to prevent fraud, this provision introduces uncertainty into legitimate real estate transactions. Even short delays can disrupt closings, refinancing, and property transfers, causing financial harm to buyers, sellers, and lenders. This could create a chilling effect on property transactions statewide.

Although the bill shields recorders from liability for good-faith actions, it provides no clear recourse for individuals harmed by wrongful delays or misclassification of documents as suspicious. This imbalance could lead to costly litigation and erode trust in municipal offices.

The bill requires every municipality to establish a property alert notification system by January 1, 2028, and maintain searchable logs of recorded documents. These mandates impose significant administrative and financial burdens on local governments without providing any funding mechanism. Smaller municipalities, in particular, may struggle to comply, resulting in uneven enforcement and potential liability concerns. Residents of Burrillville (and most other cities and towns) already have a method where they can monitor any documents recorded into land evidence with their name on it.

The requirement for municipalities to create searchable logs that include names, addresses, and notarial officer details raises privacy issues. Making these logs publicly searchable could expose sensitive personal information, increasing the risk of identity theft and fraud, the very problem the bill seeks to prevent. Additionally, it would require a recorder to verify the name or commission information of a notarial officer matches official records, for every document. This is an incredible burden to municipal staff.

H7551, while well-intentioned, creates administrative burdens, risks transaction delays, raises privacy concerns, and imposes disproportionate penalties. A better approach would involve targeted

enforcement, improved identity verification standards, and state-funded technology upgrades rather than sweeping mandates and harsh criminal provisions.

I respectfully urge the Committee to reject House Bill 2026 – H 7551 and consider alternative measures that protect property owners without imposing undue burdens on municipalities or the real estate market. Thank you for your time and consideration

Vicki T. Martin, CMC

Town Clerk



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