



**RHODE ISLAND COALITION
OF HOUSING PROVIDERS**

www.ricohp.org

March 16, 2026

To Honorable Representative Carol McEntee
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903
VIA Email: housejudiciary@rilegislature.gov

RE: Letter in OPPOSITION to House Bill No. 8141

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Rhode Island Coalition of Housing Providers (“the coalition”) in strong opposition to House Bill 8141. While we recognize the importance of ensuring access to justice, we have significant concerns regarding several key provisions of this bill and their potential negative consequences for both housing providers and the broader rental market in Rhode Island.

One of our primary concerns lies in the proposal to provide publicly funded legal representation to all tenants in covered proceedings, regardless of their financial capacity. While we firmly believe in access to legal assistance for those in genuine need, we question the equity of providing free legal counsel to tenants who possess the means to retain their own representation. This approach could inadvertently strain the resources of existing legal aid organizations, potentially leading to delays for vulnerable tenants who truly rely on such services.

Furthermore, a proposal of this nature would carry significant financial responsibility and should only be seriously considered after careful analysis. **The Coalition urges the legislature to obtain a fiscal note prior to further considering this bill.**

We are also troubled by the bill's mandate for annual data reporting and surveillance of landlords, tenants, and legal outcomes. This provision raises significant privacy concerns and could potentially stigmatize housing providers involved in eviction proceedings, irrespective of the merits of such cases. Publicly disclosing the names of landlords involved in eviction cases, without providing the full context, could lead to unfair reputational damage and may discourage housing providers from taking necessary legal action in cases of lease violations or non-payment of rent.

Furthermore, we note the absence of a clearly defined funding mechanism for the extensive legal representation, administrative oversight, and community education programs mandated by the bill. This raises concerns that taxpayers may bear a substantial and ongoing financial burden. We also foresee a potential for duplication of services with existing legal aid organizations, which could lead to inefficiencies and a misallocation of valuable resources. Additionally, lack of funding coupled with a "Right" to legal representation, could halt lawful evictions if resources are not available.

Several other aspects of the bill warrant our opposition. The imposition of new lease requirements could inadvertently invalidate existing lease agreements and increase legal risks for property managers and landlords. The broad definitions of "eligible individuals" and "covered proceedings" could potentially encourage frivolous or strategic litigation, leading to delays in rightful eviction proceedings and increased litigation costs for housing providers. Moreover, the bill's mandates on sheriffs and constables to distribute state-created pamphlets during service of process appear to add tasks that fall outside their primary responsibilities. Similarly, the imposition of notice requirements on all residential leases could create unnecessary compliance burdens for property managers and landlords.

We are concerned that the cumulative effect of these provisions could create disincentives for individuals and entities to invest in and provide rental housing in Rhode Island. The increased risk of prolonged legal battles and the potential for financial strain could lead to higher housing costs or a reduction in rental availability, ultimately harming the very tenants the bill intends to protect.

In conclusion, while we share the goal of ensuring fair and equitable housing practices, we believe that House Bill 8141, in its current form, presents significant challenges and carries the risk of unintended negative consequences. We urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to carefully reconsider the provisions outlined above and engage in a more comprehensive dialogue with housing providers and other stakeholders to develop more balanced and effective solutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Shannon Elizabeth Weinstein
On Behalf of The RI Coalition of Housing Providers