

March 26, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: HOUSE BILL 8106 – AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY -- ESTATES IN REAL PROPERTY

Dear Chair McEntee and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 8106, which would prohibit the use of restrictive covenants that prevent grocery store competition.

Competition is a critical driver of consumer choice, affordability, and innovation. In an era of persistently high food prices and supply chain disruptions, Rhode Island residents, particularly those in underserved or lower-income communities, cannot afford artificial barriers that limit access to affordable groceries. Yet, under current law, national supermarket chains are permitted to impose restrictive covenants on properties they sell, prohibiting the operation of any future grocery stores at those sites for up to 30 years. This is an anti-competitive and anti-consumer practice.

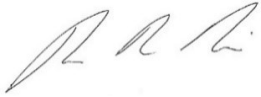
From the municipal perspective, these covenants undermine the economic vitality of our cities and towns. They leave behind underutilized or vacant commercial properties, often in prominent locations that could otherwise serve community needs. These parcels frequently become eyesores and contribute to commercial blight, reducing nearby property values and municipal tax revenues. Local planners and economic development directors are left with fewer tools to revitalize commercial corridors and meet resident needs when such covenants tie their hands for decades.

Moreover, restrictive covenants run counter to the broader goals of food access, public health, and sustainability that many of our communities are striving to achieve. They can limit opportunities to address food deserts and stifle the entry of local, independent, or regional grocers who would otherwise bring fresh competition and investment into our neighborhoods.

By passing House Bill 8106, Rhode Island can align its laws with fair market principles, prevent abusive real estate practices, and give municipalities the flexibility they need to encourage responsible redevelopment and ensure that residents have equitable access to essential services.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your consideration of our perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. R. Rossi', written in a cursive style.

Randy R. Rossi  
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Judiciary Committee