



January 25, 2024

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey
Chair, House Municipal Government and Housing Committee
Rhode Island State House, 82 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: In support of House Bill 7062 -- An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – Zoning Ordinances

Dear Chair Casey and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of ONE Neighborhood Builders, I write in support of HB 7062, introduced by Representative June Speakman, to provide uniform zoning standards for accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

This bill would allow by-right permitting of ADUs that fit existing zoning ordinances. ADUs are valuable and practical tools to increase housing supply within existing lots. This bill would make the permitting process easier for Rhode Islanders hoping to build ADUs, removing a barrier that impedes housing development in Rhode Island.

Zoning and land use changes that facilitate housing development, like this bill, along with financial investment, are critical tools to address Rhode Island's shortage of housing, especially affordable housing. In 2022, Rhode Island [had](#) the lowest per capita rate of new housing construction of any U.S. state, and the National Low Income Housing Coalition reported that we had a shortage of [47,753 rental homes](#) available and affordable to those who earn up to half of the area median income (AMI) in 2021.

ONE Neighborhood Builders has built almost 600 rental and for-sale homes for low- and moderate-income households, and our community development and non-profit colleagues have built hundreds more. However, this is not enough housing to close this gap in the need for affordable homes. Increasing the supply of units that are available and affordable to low-income Rhode Islanders would greatly ameliorate our state's current affordable housing crisis.

Our state legislature has a critical role to play in incentivizing the development of quality, safe, and affordable housing for Rhode Islanders earning little or no income. I urge the Committee to pass this bill and others that would encourage the production, preservation, and protection of affordable housing and work with affordable housing advocates to ensure that the bills' intentions match the impacts.

I applaud Rep. Speakman and Speaker Shekarchi for their leadership on this legislation and for their steadfast commitment to housing issues in Rhode Island.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Hawkins
President & CEO, ONE Neighborhood Builders