



January 25, 2024

The Honorable Stephen Casey
Chair, House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
Rhode Island State House, Providence RI 02903

Re: Support of H-7062 – Uniform standards for accessory dwelling units

Dear Chair Casey and Members of the Committee:

Homes RI is a multisector coalition of organizations and advocates focused on increasing the supply of safe, healthy and affordable homes across Rhode Island. We write to express support for House Bill 7062, legislation to provide uniform zoning standards for accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

Rhode Island's housing challenges are well documented. The cost of rents and homes for sale have risen substantially in the past three years (in December, reports published from Zillow showed Providence having the highest rent increases in the country), relegating more and more households to housing that is not meeting their needs. We have ranked dead last in the nation for annual housing production – according to data from a 2023 report released by the Rhode Island Foundation, for every 1,000 Rhode Island residents, only one housing unit is built. The report estimated more than 55,000 smaller homes, such as studios, one bedrooms, and ADUs are needed to match demand for housing, corresponding to changing household formation and demographics.

Accessory dwelling units are a proven and practical strategy to alleviate the pressures of lagging housing production while working within existing lot and building footprints. They help meet demand for homes that are “right-sized” for smaller households, including older adults, people with disabilities, and couples. They can be designed in ways that have minimal impact to the existing built environment. Enabling the construction of ADUs in cities and towns across Rhode Island will enhance the diversity of our state's housing stock and help move communities forward towards having robust housing options that meet the needs of their residents.

With respect to H-7062, it is important to note that this legislation prohibits new ADUs from being used as short-term rentals, a meritorious concern raised by many municipalities. One suggestion that we offer in consideration of this legislation that would be additive to this protection against “housing leakage” is to enable cities and towns to establish a requirement for year-round leases for ADUs, in order to ensure that these homes are being inhabited by long-term residents. In addition, it is important that the final bill provide language of maximum clarity to municipalities so they can best interpret how to implement this important policy.

We are very appreciative of the sponsor, Rep. Speakman and to Speaker Shekarchi for championing this legislation, as well as the bills cosponsors Leader Blazejewski, Reps. Tanzi, Cotter, Henries, Donovan, Carson, McGaw, and Cortvriend. This passage of this bill and other zoning and land use reform policies is important to bolster the financial investments that have been made to produce more homes in Rhode Island. We urge the Committee to pass this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie West

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Homes RI Organizations Endorsing this Testimony:

Amnesty International USA – Local Group 1016
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island
Brown Initiative for Policy HOME
Community Housing Land Trust of Rhode Island
Foster Forward
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Providence and East Bay
Housing Network of Rhode Island
HousingWorks RI
Looking Upwards, Inc.
LISC Rhode Island
MLPB
Neighbors Welcome
ONE Neighborhood Builders
OSCIL
PCF Development
RAMP – Real Access Motivates Progress
Rhode Island Black Business Association
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence
RI Coalition to End Homelessness
RI Elder Info
RI Working Families Party
Westbay Community Action
West Warwick Health Equity Zone
Youth Pride, Inc.