

January 23, 2024

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey , Chairman
Members, House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for H7062

On behalf of the Senior Agenda Coalition of Rhode Island, I am pleased to support H7062 by Representatives Speakman, Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Tanzi, Cotter, Henriess, Donovan, Carson, McGaw and Cortvriend. The mission of the Senior Agenda Coalition is to mobilize people to achieve power in order to implement an agenda that improves the quality of life of older Rhode Islanders. We accomplish this through *community organizing, public education and legislative advocacy*. Our Coalition appreciates the tremendous effort that Rep. Speakman and Speaker Sheharchi have been putting into finding solutions to the housing crisis impacting all our families including our older householders. The issues are complex and critical and we applaud their commitment and others members of the legislature working to address the housing crisis.

Housing is an important issue for our older population.

Housing costs are the 2nd largest expense for older adults living in the community. More than half of older renters pay more than 30% of income on housing as do 33% of home owners (American Community Survey 2022). The 2023 Elder Index created by the University of Massachusetts Gerontology Institute (ElderIndex.org) shows housing costs for a single RI renter in good health @ \$1,115/ month and they would need slightly more than \$30,000 to meet basic living expenses. Yet, 27% of RI older households have income less than \$25,000 (ACS 2021 table B19037.)

The economic security of many older adults Rapidly has declined due to the rising costs for basic needs including housing and highlights the urgent need to address housing issues for this population. Promoting development of more Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in our municipalities, as called for H7062, would expand housing options for older adults. Our state population is projected to reach one out of four persons by 2030 and there will be a demand for smaller, more affordable homes for older households. ADU's make use of existing infrastructure and can be good alternatives to provide housing for an older loved one needing care who still wants some independence but feels secure living near a loved one or to provide housing for a caregiver to live close by. An older person may also wish to create an ADU for themselves and rent out their larger home. ADUs can really be an option for people of all ages.

H7062 creates two categories of "by right" ADUs: (1) on any lot with a total area of 20,000 sq ft or more for which the primary use is residential and (2) where the proposed ADU, limited to 900 sq. ft., is within the existing footprint of the primary structure or existing secondary attached or detached structure and does not expand the footprint of the structure. A municipality shall not require such permitted ADUs to make infrastructure improvements unless required by state law or regulations.

I urge you to recommend passage of this bill and thank you for your support and attention given to legislation to address the state's housing crisis.

Sincerely,

Maureen Maigret, Policy Advisor
Senior Agenda Coalition of RI