



STEELE REALTY CONSULTANTS
INTERNATIONAL

January 25, 2024

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey
Chairman
House Committee on Municipal Government & Housing

RE: H 7062 – Legislation Related to Accessory Dwelling Units

Dear Chairman Casey and Committee Members:

My name is Rita Danielle Steele and I am here today to share my expertise regarding proposed House Bill H 7062 which seeks to eliminate current barriers to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) across Rhode Island. Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for this legislation.

Currently serving in leadership at both the Rhode Island and the Greater Providence Board of Realtors, and as an attorney and professional consultant in the Rhode Island real estate community, I have been working in the real estate field and as a Realtor for over 15 years.

Opening up to the potential of ADU's is a growing trend nationwide, Committee members can look at their success in our neighboring state of Massachusetts where Boston's mayor Michele Wu has piloted interest free grant programs to encourage their development. As her administration advocates, ADU's "expand lower-cost housing options, empower residents to build wealth, and foster diverse, multi-generational living spaces." I could not agree more.

Jesse Kanson-Benanav, Executive Director of Abundant Housing Massachusetts, asserts that "ADUs are a gentle way to add more homes to our neighborhoods, while ensuring that families stay together by providing housing for grandparents, recent graduates, or loved ones with disabilities. ADU's provide the flexibility that homeowners need, while providing much-needed rental homes for more of our neighbors." Leaders in our own housing advocacy community have surely shared similar sentiments with you and your fellow State Representatives.

It is very common for home buyers to desire ADU's for multiple reasons. Most often I see them desiring one for either affordability purposes (i.e. because they will be the difference between a home or its upkeep being affordable or not), or for them to provide an independent living space for a family member. As a single mom to a toddler myself, this resonates with me most; how I would love to have means to create a space for a family member to live on my property. The reciprocal value we could provide to one another would be invaluable. As it is now, I do not have this option available to me, and rents here are too high for them to relocate otherwise. BOTH of my best friends, with children of their own in similarly zoned neighborhoods, are currently in the

exact same position, both with aging parents that would both love to downsize and live adjacent to and support their grandchildren.

Another, perhaps less emphasized consequence of this legislation would be better regulation of existing units. My experience as an owner of real estate brokerage exposed me to a lot of existing ADU's that are currently illegal and therefore unregulated. Every Realtor has had a least one, if not several transactions where stoves, sinks, or entire kitchens had to be ripped out of basements of third floors due to their illegality under our current zoning laws in order to transfer a property to new ownership. This resulted not only in a loss of potential income or supportive housing for the new buyers but also in a perpetuation of potential living spaces remaining unregulated.

Thank you for your consideration and for allowing me an opportunity to provide my opinion on this matter. We need more housing in this State, full stop. Let this be another step toward making that happen. I support passage of H 7062, and I trust in this Committee's commitment to the betterment and improved inclusivity of our Rhode Island community.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rita Steele', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Rita Danielle Steele, Esq.
Principal Broker Owner

Steele Realty Consultants LLC

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