



March 12, 2024

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

Re: Support for H7982, H7983, H7985, H7986

Dear Chair Casey, First Vice Chair Fogarty, Second Vice Chair Speakman, and Distinguished Committee Members,

RIHousing is grateful for the leadership that Speaker Shekarchi and other General Assembly members have shown in continuing to make housing a top priority for the state. The General Assembly has been a key partner to help address the state's critical shortage of affordable housing. We are proud to support those efforts through our membership on the Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Commission and the Land Use Commission and through the implementation of approved programs and policies.

In particular, we applaud the Speaker and the sponsors of the package of fifteen housing bills that were introduced last week for continuing to think creatively about how to address Rhode Island's housing challenges. Rhode Island is facing a critical housing shortage and residents continue to face rising housing costs. We look forward to working with the General Assembly and other partners in the months ahead to pass legislation that can make a real difference to in creating tools and streamlining processes to address the housing crisis.

Several bills from that package of housing legislation are before this Committee tonight, including H7982, H7983, H7985, and H7986.

H7982 makes clear that there can be no local regulation of coastal wetlands and freshwater wetlands beyond state agency requirements. **H7983** clarifies the makeup and structure of the Building Code Office, clarifies the role of the State Building Code Commissioner, and establishes a building code education and training unit. **H7985** enables the creation of an online, publicly available, statewide geographic information system (GIS) of land related resources, such as zoning, wetlands and floodplains, incorporating information from all municipalities. **H7986** requires towns and cities to annually publish a list of abandoned properties and clarifies the process for the sale of the property to a receiver, with a priority given to receivers planning to redevelop properties as affordable housing.

Each of these bills continues the General Assembly's work to address the housing crisis in Rhode Island whether by clarifying the statewide standards for wetland regulation, furthering the capacity of building inspectors, creating a statewide resource with information on land related resources, or by streamlining and improving the receivership process. RIHousing looks forward to working with the Committee, the Speaker, and the bill sponsors to achieve the goal of increasing the supply of affordable housing in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carol Ventura", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carol Ventura
Executive Director