



March 12, 2024

The Honorable Steven Casey  
House Municipal Government and Housing Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith St  
Providence RI, 02903

RE: House Bill Number: H7982, H7985, H7986 Relating to Towns and Cities- Zoning Ordinances

Dear Chairman Casey and Honorable Members of the Municipal Government and Housing Committee:

I am writing to express our concern for House Legislation H7982, H7985, H7986 which addresses low-income housing. During our recent executive board meeting, members raised significant apprehensions about the potential implications of these bills on the managerial rights of municipalities.

- **H7982**, which proposes amendments to zoning ordinances related to wetland buffers, we understand the importance of environmental protection measures in development projects. However, we fear that the proposed changes might encroach upon the autonomy of municipalities in managing their zoning regulations. Municipalities should retain the authority to tailor zoning ordinances according to their unique environmental circumstances and community needs.
- **H7985**'s mandate for the creation of a statewide geographic information system of land resources raises concerns about data management and privacy issues. While we appreciate the goal of enhancing access to land-related information, the implementation of such a system must prioritize data security and respect the autonomy of local governments in managing their land records.
- **H7986**'s requirement for towns and cities to publish a list of abandoned properties and related amendments raises questions about the practicality and effectiveness of such measures. While addressing the issue of abandoned properties is crucial for community revitalization, the proposed approach may place undue burdens on municipalities without providing adequate support or resources.

Our municipal leaders are committed to fostering responsible housing development and improving housing opportunities for Rhode Islanders, we believe that collaboration between the state and local governments is essential. Zoning and land use decisions should remain within the purview of local authorities, who are best positioned to understand the unique needs and dynamics of their communities.

We urge policymakers to engage in meaningful dialogue with our municipal stakeholders to address these concerns and develop legislation that promotes housing construction and rehabilitation while respecting the autonomy of local governments. Together, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and sustainable housing landscape for all Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for considering our perspective on these important matters. We look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with you to advance housing policies that benefit our communities.

On behalf of the League of Cities and Towns thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express our views.

Sincerely,

David M. Bodah  
Associate Director

Cc: Municipal Government and Housing Committee  
Ernie Almonte, Executive Director, RILCT