



April 4th, 2025

Dear Members of the House Municipal Government and Housing Committee,

Reclaim RI urges you to reject **Subsections B and D** of House Bill 5688. While we recognize the importance of solving Rhode Island's housing crisis, these provisions would make it worse by accelerating displacement and gentrification.

Subsection B would open the door for developers to convert commercial buildings into high-end housing with a 30-year tax break, regardless of whether those units are affordable. That would put communities like Atlantic Mills in Providence directly in the crosshairs. Atlantic Mills is more than just a building - it is home to a vibrant, working-class community, including many Latino owned small businesses and artists who have created a cultural and economic hub for the neighborhood. Passing this bill would accelerate gentrification and push out the very people who have built and sustained these spaces for years.

We know who is behind this push. Wealthy, for-profit developers want to reshape our housing market to serve their bottom line, not the needs of our communities. We organize tenants and working-class people across Rhode Island who are tired of being pushed aside while luxury units go up and public officials hand out tax breaks to those who need them least.

Subsection D is equally dangerous. It allows existing "8-law" tax deals to continue without reform, shielding bad agreements that have already failed to deliver affordability or community benefit. Instead of learning from those mistakes, this bill doubles down on them, selling out our neighborhoods to corporate developers who treat our housing market like a game and leave families and small businesses to deal with the consequences.

And let's be honest - this bill amends a section of the law titled "Qualified Low-Income Housing," yet these changes would do the exact opposite. Subsections B and D would give public benefits to luxury and market-rate developments. That is a misapplication of the law and a betrayal of its purpose. These provisions have no place in legislation that claims to serve low-income Rhode Islanders.

Atlantic Mills is just one example of what is at stake. But this is happening all across the state. We ask you to stand with tenants, small businesses, and working families by rejecting these amendments. Let's build a housing system that works for everyone, not just those at the top.

Please stand with the communities you represent and reject Subsections B and D.

Sincerely,
Reclaim RI