

March 11, 2025

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey, Chair
House Municipal Government and Housing
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: BILL NUMBER H-5797 – RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- ZONING ORDINANCES

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I write to express our support for House Bill 5797, which would establish a definition for "co-living housing" in the state's zoning ordinance provisions and allow municipalities to incorporate this model into their zoning regulations.

Rhode Island, like many states, faces an ongoing housing crisis that demands innovative and flexible solutions. Co-living housing presents a cost-effective and energy-efficient alternative that can expand affordable housing opportunities while optimizing land use. This model, which has been successfully implemented in other states, offers shared common spaces, amenities, and facilities while ensuring residents maintain private bedrooms, similar to a dormitory-style arrangement.

House Bill 5797 provides municipalities with an additional tool to address local housing needs. By enabling cities and towns to incorporate co-living housing into their zoning ordinances as a special provision, this legislation supports efforts to diversify housing stock and accommodate residents seeking affordable, community-oriented living arrangements.

The League recognizes the urgency of addressing Rhode Island's housing shortage, and we appreciate this bill's role in promoting adaptable and sustainable housing options. We acknowledge that municipalities have unique needs, and we are actively reviewing this bill in collaboration with our members to ensure that the proposed language effectively supports our cities and towns. As we continue this process, we look forward to working with the bill's sponsor to discuss any possible amendments that may provide additional clarity and strengthen the legislation's impact.

We are encouraged by this legislation which grants municipalities flexibility to determine whether co-living housing aligns with their local needs.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. The League remains committed to working collaboratively with the General Assembly to develop policies that strengthen our communities and enhance the quality of life for Rhode Island residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. R. Rossi".

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Municipal Government and Housing