



May 1, 2025

The Honorable Stephen Casey
Chair, House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Providence RI 02903

Re: Support for House Bill 5801 SubA

Dear Chair Casey and Members of the Committee:

The mission of the Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI) is to increase the supply of safe, healthy, and affordable homes in thriving communities. On behalf of HNRI and our membership of 18 nonprofit affordable housing developers, I write in **strong support of House Bill 5801 SubA**. We thank Speaker Shekarchi and the bill sponsors for their sustained leadership on housing and for advancing a comprehensive package of legislation that supports increased opportunities to build more homes for Rhode Islanders that are critically needed.

The cost of housing – including the price of homes for rent, homes for sale, construction, and utilities - has increased dramatically since 2019, and people cannot keep pace. There are not enough homes being built, and the choked supply, combined with upward economic pressures and inflation, means more Rhode Islanders are facing housing instability, or are stuck in homes that no longer match their life's circumstances. These four housing bills build on prior legislation and further our progress in reducing barriers to residential development and ensuring cities and towns create opportunities for low- and moderate-income housing.

H-5801 Sub A clarifies definitions of and procedures for approval of developing low- and moderate-income housing. The proposed legislation makes two significant and important changes to the definition of whether LMI housing exists in relation to consistency with local needs. Firstly, it makes clear that the ten percent (10%) benchmark does not serve as a ceiling for LMI housing units but rather a floor. Secondly, it removes language that previously allowed municipalities with a higher percentage of rental housing stock to be considered “exempt” under the LMIH Act, regardless of whether the units are deed-restricted affordable housing or able to be counted as LMI housing under the § 45-53 statute. The changes proposed by **H-5801 SubA** appropriately acknowledges that adding to our state's LMIH inventory must be a sustained effort by all municipalities and is an essential component of achieving our overall housing goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my support of this important piece of legislation with this Committee and I urge your support to advance **H-5801 SubA**. I am available to answer any questions you might have and can be reached at 401-721-5680 ext. 104 or mlodge@housingnetworkri.org.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melina Lodge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melina Lodge, Executive Director