



March 20th, 2025

The Honorable Representative Stephen M. Casey  
Chair of the House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing  
Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony Supporting H5955 - The Department of Housing Land Bank Program

To the Honorable Chair, Vice Chairs, and Members:

Rhode Islanders currently face an incredible housing stock shortage, most notably homes whose rents or mortgages do not exceed thirty percent of income for those earning no more than eighty percent of median income. Simultaneously, and for varying reasons, homes and other inhabitable buildings are abandoned or neglected. One solution is a land bank, a government entity tasked with mobilizing unutilized publicly-owned land for public and non-profit housing development and acquiring abandoned, neglected, foreclosed, or tax delinquent properties to redevelop or maintain as affordable housing.

If enacted, H5955 will establish such a land bank within the Department Of Housing. Additionally, state and municipal entities will be required to provide a list of vacant and unused properties every year to the Department Of Housing, and to share any plans they have for developing those properties. The Department Of Housing will then analyze all vacant and unused properties to determine which may be suitable to develop housing on. The land in the land bank will only be available for non-profit developers and public entities, such as public housing authorities or the Department Of Housing, to develop into housing.

A centralized entity able to acquire select properties and land will greatly relieve municipalities and varying state agencies of administrative burdens while creating an avenue for addressing the affordable housing stock shortfall. Moreover, a state entity will be poised to intervene in securing housing stock at tax foreclosures and sales increasingly frequented by private equity buyers and other investor-owners.

Land banks are valuable institutions crucial to maintaining housing affordability and for just economic revitalizations. For Rhode Island to pursue improved housing affordability and to create thriving communities, a state land bank is a necessary portion of a meaningful policy agenda. The continuing price and availability pressures far exceed current production, much less affordable housing production, and every effort is needed to ensure that all Rhode Islanders are safely and tenably housed. We strongly urge you to support this bill and recommend it for passage by the House.

Sincerely,

**Reclaim RI**