



March 17, 2025

Testimony in Support of H-5955 – Establishing the Housing Land Bank Program

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Members of the House Municipal Government and Housing Committee,

On behalf of SEIU 1199 New England, which represents over 5,000 healthcare and service sector workers across Rhode Island, we write in support of H-5955, which would create the Department of Housing Land Bank Program to facilitate the development of affordable residential housing.

Rhode Island is facing a severe housing crisis, with rising rents and a shortage of affordable homes making it harder for working families to find stable housing. Many of our members—nursing home workers, home care providers, and hospital staff—struggle to find and afford housing near their jobs. This bill offers a practical solution by:

- Allowing the state to acquire and manage land specifically for residential development, ensuring that underutilized properties are repurposed for housing.
- Creating a structured process for transferring land assets into a housing-focused land bank, making it easier to develop new affordable homes.
- Expanding opportunities for affordable housing development, helping reduce displacement and stabilize housing costs.

How H-5955 Helps Workers

A certified nursing assistant (CNA) in Rhode Island, earning just above the income limit for traditional housing assistance, may spend more than half of their paycheck on rent. With limited affordable options, they are forced to commute long distances or live in overcrowded conditions just to make ends meet.

By expanding the supply of reasonably priced homes, H-5955 would create more affordable housing opportunities and ensure that Rhode Islanders who work in essential jobs can live in the communities they serve.

A Smart, Sustainable Approach to Affordable Housing

- Repurposes state-owned land into housing solutions rather than leaving properties vacant.
- Encourages responsible, strategic development that aligns with Rhode Island's housing needs.
- Prioritizes affordability, ensuring that housing built through the land bank remains accessible to low- and moderate-income families.

Housing stability is essential for Rhode Island's workforce and economy. H-5955 takes a responsible and proactive approach to addressing the housing crisis and providing workers and families with the opportunity to live affordably.

SEIU 1199NE urges this committee to support and pass H-5955 to expand affordable housing, strengthen communities, and ensure that working Rhode Islanders have access to stable homes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alex Moore
Political Director, SEIU 1199NE
319 Broadway
Providence, RI 02909
678-910-3378
amoore@seiu1199ne.org