

Dawn Huntley

From: Jimmy Dufurrena <jimmydufurrena@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 9:57 PM
To: House Municipal Government and Housing Committee
Subject: In SUPPORT of H5958 (Mixed Use Zoning), H5509 (e-Permitting), and H5373 (Building Codes)

Dear Chair Stephen Casey and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I have recently addressed this committee in support of two pending bills that fall under the general realm of enabling the expansion of the housing supply in Rhode Island. It is my intention to expand upon those sentiments by expressing my support herein of three additional House Bills which will in no uncertain terms aid in accomplishing this goal. I urge this committee to support H5958 (Mixed-Use Zoning), H5509 (e-Permitting), and H5373 (Building Codes) during this legislative session. To tackle the housing crisis in Rhode Island, we must commit to a multi-pronged approach. Each of these three bills will tackle different yet intertwined facets of this crisis, thereby enabling a well-rounded solution to this pressing hardship that affects us all.

The state of discussion regarding zoning reform in Rhode Island has stagnated in recent decades. Serious reform will require each of our cities and towns to do their part in creating a new vision for our future. H5958 (Mixed-Use Zoning) will create mixed use overlay districts, allowing us to build vibrant, healthy communities around the entire state. This bill will quickly attract those who want to invest in our economy by incentivizing the transformation of dull and forgotten parcels that deserve to be treated as interesting and exciting parts of their respective city or town's identity. H5958 will fundamentally allow us to revitalize previously under-utilized commercial lots and transform them into something vibrant and full of greater purpose.

Besides enabling incentives as a means of building stronger towns and cities, it is not the only tool in this committee's toolbox that is being debated at this time. H5509 (e-Permitting) is a common sense proposal that will allow homebuilders to file for permits online. Instead of dealing with the bureaucratic status quo, this bill will slash red tape and eliminate the hurdles involved with requiring a trip down to city hall during the narrow window of business hours provided by extending the opportunity to file permits electronically at any time from any place. This new-found flexibility will measurably increase the speed of both government and commerce in Rhode Island, as well as numb the headaches of anyone who finds themselves needing to interface with these systems.

Moreover, the third and final bill in this trifecta of sensible policy is H5373 (Building Codes). Out of all of the propositions being discussed, I would like to ask the committee to consider this with the highest reverence. This bill will amend the state building code to allow for small-time developers to easily create today similar multi-family units that were legal merely a generation ago, that are now cumbersome to be constructed under current regulations. By allowing three and four-unit apartments to be constructed according to the international residential code as opposed to commercial, it becomes far more financially feasible to invest in the creation of middle housing in the state of Rhode Island. This is the most direct approach to increasing the housing supply out of everything presented herein.

In consideration of these three bills, it is self-evident that while each proposal tackles a different aspect of this pressing crisis, when they are combined together, the result is a complete package that delicately wraps together a pragmatic offensive against Rhode Island's most pressing issue for working families.

Sincerely,
Jimmy Bailey Dufurrena
Survey Party Chief
Riverside, RI