



March 20, 2025

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

**RE: Support for HB 5955 – An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – Department of  
Housing Land Bank Program; and  
HB 5958 – An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – Zoning Ordinances**

Dear Chair Casey and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of One Neighborhood Builders, a Rhode Island community development organization based in Providence, I write in support of House Bills 5955 and 5958, both introduced by Representative Speakman. These bills would create a Department of Housing Land Bank Program and reform zoning law, including allowing the transfer of development rights and encouraging greater use of mixed-use overlay districts. Other states and municipalities currently use these tools to develop housing in their communities, and these bills would create new avenues for our state to facilitate the production of housing for Rhode Islanders at a variety of income levels.

Rhode Island [had](#) the lowest per capita rate of new housing construction of any U.S. state in 2022, and Rhode Island [has](#) a shortage of approximately 24,000 rental homes that are available and affordable to households earning extremely low incomes (an annual income of \$31,000 for a family of four). One Neighborhood Builders has built almost 600 rental and for-sale homes for low- and moderate-income households, and our colleagues have built hundreds more. However, this is not enough to address our affordable housing needs.

Our state legislature has a critical role to play in ensuring Rhode Islanders have access to quality, safe, and affordable housing. Speaker Shekarchi and the House of Representatives have prioritized smart revisions to zoning and land use policies and administrative processes that reduce barriers to development in communities across RI. This has meaningfully advanced progress and yet, there is more to do. Rep. Speakman's bills represent additional actions the legislature can take to advance housing development.

I encourage the committee to pass these bills. I am happy to talk further about these issues; please feel free to reach out to me at [chapman@onenb.org](mailto:chapman@onenb.org). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Peter H. Chapman  
President & CEO, One Neighborhood Builders