



March 5, 2026

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

Re: Support of H 8000, H 8001, H 8002, H 8003, H 8004, H 8005, H 8006, H 8007

On behalf of the RI Hospitality Association, which represents foodservice and lodging businesses across our state, I am writing to express our strong support for the Speaker's 2026 comprehensive housing package.

Rhode Island's housing crisis is not only a social challenge, it is an economic one. Our industry relies on a stable and available workforce. When employees cannot afford to live in the communities where they work, businesses struggle to hire and retain staff, shifts go unfilled, operating hours are reduced, and economic growth is constrained. Housing availability and affordability are directly tied to the vitality of our hospitality and tourism economy.

We commend the General Assembly's continued leadership in addressing these barriers through thoughtful, practical reforms. Efforts in recent years to reduce red tape and streamline approvals have produced measurable results, including a significant increase in building permits and a reduction in land use case backlogs. These outcomes demonstrate that smart policy changes can meaningfully increase housing production.

The legislation before you builds on that momentum. Measures such as allowing infill subdivision in areas with existing infrastructure (H 8007), establishing parking maximums near transit (H 8005), permitting single-staircase construction for smaller residential buildings (H 8002), and enabling adaptive reuse of vacant public buildings (H 8003) are common-sense reforms that lower costs and encourage responsible development. The tax assessment provisions for affordable rental housing (H 8006) and technical improvements to zoning and subdivision processes (H 8004) further promote predictability and feasibility for projects that might otherwise stall.

We also recognize the importance of the Homeless Bill of Rights amendment (H 8000) and the SAFE Units legislation (H 8001) in addressing immediate humanitarian needs while longer-term housing supply continues to grow.

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Hospitality businesses see firsthand the impact of housing instability. When individuals and families lack safe, stable housing, it affects workforce participation, local spending, and community well-being. Expanding housing supply across income levels is essential to keeping Rhode Island competitive and affordable for our residents.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and for your sustained commitment to addressing Rhode Island's housing crisis. The RI Hospitality Association proudly supports this housing package and respectfully urges its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Farouk Rajab", is written over a white background.

Farouk Rajab
President & CEO
RI Hospitality Association

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