



Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

March 5, 2026

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

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I support House Bill 8022, *An Act Relating to Taxation – Property Exempt*. If enacted, this legislation would exempt the real and tangible personal property of Higher Ground International.

Higher Ground International is a vital nonprofit serving marginalized communities in Providence and across Rhode Island, with a focus on immigrants and refugees from Liberia and other West African nations. Offering culturally competent programs including elder enrichment, job readiness, financial assistance, and direct supports to recently arrived refugees and immigrants, Higher Ground International provides some of our most vulnerable neighbors with the tools they need to thrive in their new home.

Rhode Island is home to one of the largest Liberian populations in the country, making Higher Ground International's work especially critical. For many Providence and Rhode Island families, this organization serves as a first point of contact and an ongoing source of support.

Recent federal actions reducing refugee admission levels and restructuring federal funding have impacted community organizations, including Higher Ground International. Exempting their property would reduce an operational burden and free up much needed resources that can be used to provide direct support to their clients.

I thank Representative Slater for sponsoring House Bill 8022 and respectfully urge the committee to vote in favor of this legislation.

Sincerely,


Brett P. Smiley
Mayor