

March 17, 2026

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

RE: HOUSE BILL 7563 – AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- THE DEVELOPMENT
REVIEW EFFICIENCY ACT

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we write to express concerns regarding House Bill 7563, the Development Review Efficiency Act. While the League appreciates the sponsor's goal of improving efficiency in the development review process, several provisions of the legislation raise concerns for municipalities responsible for administering building permits, code enforcement, and public safety protections.

Municipal building officials and inspectors serve a critical role in ensuring construction complies with state and local building codes designed to protect residents and the built environment. Allowing property owners or contractors to directly hire licensed third-party providers to review development documents and perform building inspections raises concerns regarding potential conflicts of interest, as the individual certifying compliance would be contracted and compensated by the project applicant rather than operating independently within the municipal regulatory framework.

The League is also concerned about provisions that establish strict timelines for municipal review and allow permits, development documents, or certificates of occupancy to be considered approved "as a matter of law" if a municipality does not respond within the prescribed timeframe. While municipalities strive to process applications efficiently, review timelines can depend on project complexity, coordination across departments, and staffing capacity. Automatic approvals could create situations where projects move forward without full municipal review, potentially undermining code compliance and public safety safeguards.

Additionally, the legislation limits the authority of municipalities to establish procedures or standards governing independent providers operating within their jurisdictions. Cities and towns remain ultimately responsible for ensuring that buildings within their communities meet applicable safety standards, and limiting their oversight authority may create operational challenges for local building departments.

While the League recognizes the importance of efficient permitting processes to support development and housing production, we believe any changes to the development review system should be carefully developed in coordination with municipal building officials to ensure efficiency improvements do not compromise public safety or local oversight.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on this legislation and would welcome continued discussion with the sponsor and municipal stakeholders.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. R. Rossi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Municipal Government and Housing