



March 31, 2026

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

**RE: Oppose H7219, H7779, and H7374**

Dear Chairman Casey and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island, our member agencies and community partners, and the low income Rhode Islanders we seek to serve, I write in opposition of **H7219 and H7779**, legislation that would grant municipalities broad authority to require owner occupancy of the primary structure relative to allowing ADU development, mandate affordable rents on non family occupied ADUs and limits the allowed square footage of proposed ADUs. Additionally, we respectfully oppose **H7374**, legislation which amends the definition of “household” to allow municipalities to set a maximum of the number of unrelated persons living together in one housing unit.

During the last five legislative sessions, the growing need for more affordable housing in this state has taken center stage with policymakers. Historically low inventory of homes for sale and for rent coupled with exploding demand for housing have driven housing costs out of reach for many Rhode Islanders, particularly our lowest income households. Decades long reductions in building permit activity, restrictive land use policies set forth by municipalities, low vacancy rates, the state’s chronic underinvestment in affordable housing and inadequate worker wages have all been major contributing factors to the lack of available homes and housing unaffordability. **The primary strategy to solve our housing crisis is to start building our way out of it.** Secondary to this, we must also be cognizant that we do not advance policies that artificially inflate demand and drive up housing costs for Rhode Islanders.

**H7219 and H7779** are both a step in the wrong direction, only re-affirming many of the local practices that have in fact been a primary driver of our housing crisis. Given the newness of the ADU law, there is little to no statewide data available that demonstrates there are rampant issues/abuse that necessitate either piece of legislation at this time. We are concerned that the premature introduction of such limitations will negatively impact ADU production overall.

While we do not believe that the intent of **H7374** is to create harm for Rhode Islanders but is rather attempting to address ongoing issues presented in student housing arrangements, there would unfortunately be negative consequences for every day Rhode Islanders if this bill were passed. In light of our state’s acute housing shortage, we are seeing more and more households, and in particular smaller households, needing to explore shared housing arrangement due to high rental costs. Arbitrarily limiting the number of people who can co-habitat simply because they are “unrelated” not only seems like a gross over reach of government but also drives demand artificially higher by forcing the need for more housing

units. In the absence of in place strategies that allow for greater housing development, and in particular smaller more dense housing development, inflating demand drives housing costs higher as more households are forced to compete for limited supply.

For these reasons, we respectfully oppose **H7219, H7779 and H7374** and urge the Committee to hold the bill. I am available to answer any questions you might have and can be reached at 401-721-5680 ext. 104 or [mlodge@housingnetworkri.org](mailto:mlodge@housingnetworkri.org).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melina Lodge".

Melina Lodge, MCP  
Executive Director