



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: Support of H7491

Dear Chairman Casey and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island and our Providence based Community Development Corporations, non-profit housing developers, homeless and aligned social service providers, we are please to offer our support on **H7491**, legislation that authorizes the City of Providence to issue up to \$25m voter-approved General Obligation bond to capitalize the Providence Housing Trust Fund and support the development of affordable multi-family housing within the city.

Rhode Island faces a well-documented and persistent shortage of affordable homes. Earlier this month, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, of which we are a state partner, released their annual report “*The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes*,” showing Rhode Island has a gap of 23,222 rental homes that are affordable and available to the lowest income renters. The urgency for action is underscored by market conditions. Providence has experienced some of the most significant increases in rental costs in the region in recent years, placing growing pressure on renters and exacerbating affordability challenges. This trend reflects a fundamental imbalance between housing supply and demand. Increasing the production of housing at all price points is essential to stabilizing rents over time and ensuring that residents are not priced out of the communities they call home. Addressing this challenge requires coordinated action across all levels of government, along with strong partnerships between municipalities, housing developers, community-based organizations, and the private sector.

Our members are on the front lines of addressing the state’s housing shortage. For decades, they have planned, financed, and built the housing that low-income Rhode Islanders rely on, and know firsthand the barriers that can delay or prevent much-needed development. **H7491** represents a constructive step toward creating a more predictable, efficient, and workable environment for housing production.

From our perspective, one of the most important aspects of this bill is its potential to reduce uncertainty in the development process. Unclear or inconsistent requirements can add significant time and cost to projects, ultimately limiting the number of homes that can be delivered. By providing clearer standards and a more streamlined framework, this legislation can help accelerate the pace at which housing is brought online.

In the capital city—where demand is especially high and development opportunities are often complex—these improvements are particularly meaningful. Projects frequently involve layered financing, regulatory approvals,

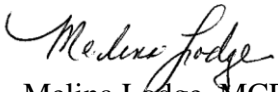
and coordination across multiple agencies. Even modest improvements in process and predictability can have an outsized impact on feasibility.

We would also like to recognize and commend the City of Providence for its leadership in advancing housing solutions. The City has taken meaningful steps in recent years to prioritize housing production, modernize processes, and engage constructively with the development community. This leadership has helped position Providence as a place where innovative approaches to addressing housing challenges can take root, and **H7491** builds on that momentum.

Importantly, policies that support housing production are also policies that support affordability. When development is delayed or constrained, costs rise and supply falls further behind demand. By helping to remove unnecessary barriers, **H7491** can contribute to a healthier housing market that better serves residents across income levels.

For these reasons, we are pleased to support **H7491** and its focus on practical and tactical solutions to Rhode Island's housing crisis. I am available to answer any questions you might have and can be reached at 401-721-5680 ext. 104 or mlodge@housingnetworkri.org.

Respectfully submitted,


Melina Lodge, MCP
Executive Director