



The Honorable Stephen M. Casey
Chair, House Committee on Municipal Government & Housing
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

March 31, 2026

RE: Support for H8036, Restoring Options in Occupancy Models (ROOM) Act

Dear Chairman Casey and Members of the Committee:

Neighbors Welcome! Rhode Island (“Neighbors Welcome”) is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit and network of neighbors advocating for more homes in Rhode Island. Our goal is to promote strong and sustainable housing production so that residents across the state and at every stage of life have housing options that meet their needs.

We are writing today in support of H8036, which will allow Rhode Island residents to have more choices about where they live, and how, and expand lower cost housing options, particularly for younger people just starting out, or older adults seeking a different housing choice.

H8036 would legalize a housing model called “co-living”, which would allow multiple households to share kitchen and bathroom facilities while maintaining their own private living spaces. Specifically, this bill will support:

- Younger people just starting out their careers, or who are currently in college or graduate school to find a home they can afford that helps to build community while providing an affordable housing option.
- Workers who are struggling to make ends meet can find an affordable option in a co-living situation, as well as community.
- Seniors on fixed incomes could benefit from shared dining areas, and opportunities to socialize or form communities.
- Breathing new life into older office buildings, which today sit vacant and unused. The layout of an office building is particularly well suited to a co-living building, as the layout often already has common kitchen and bathroom facilities (and the needed plumbing) in one area of each floor, while placing apartments around the building’s exterior.



Research done by Pew Charitable Trust found that small co-living units could be a needed housing solution for workers, providing an extremely affordable rent even in high cost housing markets.¹

We thank Representative Speakman and her cosponsors for their dedication to addressing the housing shortage and the members of the Committee for hearing this bill today. Neighbors Welcome respectfully urges the Committee to support H8036.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristina Brown".

Kristina Brown
Executive Director
Neighbors Welcome! Rhode Island

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<https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2026/03/24/converting-obsolete-offices-to-small-co-living-apartments-could-help-ease-us-housing-shortage>