



April 7, 2026

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

**Re: In Opposition of H7447, H7565, H7659**

Dear Chair Casey and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island, our member agencies and community partners, and the low- and moderate-income Rhode Islanders we serve, I write in opposition to **H7447, H7565, H7659**, which propose harmful changes to the State's Low and Moderate Income Housing Act.

The cost of housing—including labor, construction, rental and sale prices, utilities, and insurance—has risen dramatically since 2019, while incomes have not kept pace. Expanding affordable housing remains a clear priority for Rhode Islanders. In 2024, more than 60% of voters supported the Housing Opportunities Bond, underscoring broad public support for addressing this crisis. State policymakers responded by examining barriers to housing development and making significant investments to stimulate production. These policy changes and investments have been critical to making progress toward meeting the housing needs of all Rhode Islanders.

Public concern about housing affordability is both widespread and well documented. In the summer of 2025, the RI Survey Initiative at the University of Rhode Island found that 93% of respondents were concerned about the high cost of housing.

Rhode Island continues to face a severe shortage of affordable homes. Last month, the National Low Income Housing Coalition released its annual report, *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes*, showing that Rhode Island is short 23,222 rental homes that are affordable and available to the lowest-income renters. This figure reflects only the needs of the lowest-income households and does not account for additional demand among those in higher income brackets who still qualify under the low- and moderate-income definition. Addressing a challenge of this scale requires coordinated action across all levels of government, along with strong partnerships among municipalities, developers, community-based organizations, and the private sector.

We are concerned that **H7447, H7565, H7659** would hinder—or even reverse—this progress.

**H7447 (Roberts)** would reverse recent efforts to establish a uniform, statewide requirement that all municipalities meet the 10% threshold for low- and moderate-income housing. The bill reinstates an exemption that allowed some urban and suburban communities to avoid this goal—an exemption that has long been a source of concern, particularly for rural communities striving to meet their fair share.

This legislation would also allow units to be counted at the time a building permit is issued. We strongly oppose this change. A building permit is not a home—it is simply a piece of paper. Counting units before they are built creates a misleading picture of progress and undermines the integrity of the state’s housing goals. Projects may be delayed, altered, or never completed, yet would still count towards the developer’s and municipalities’ LMIH obligations. At a time of acute housing need, Rhode Island should strengthen accountability and ensure that real, habitable units are delivered—not weaken standards or rely on speculative development.

**H7565 (Fellela)** proposes changes that would add unnecessary complexity and create a separate application and approval process for “substantial multi-family housing projects.” This definition disproportionately targets developments that include low- and moderate-income housing, relies on an arbitrary unit threshold, and applies to municipalities with populations under 40,000—effectively all but seven communities in the state. As a result, the bill is inherently exclusionary and would impede the development of much-needed housing.

**H7659 (Santucci)** would allow municipalities to be considered to exclude the Comprehensive Permit as development tool if they adopt an inclusionary zoning ordinance requiring that at least 50% of units in new developments be designated as low- and moderate-income housing. While this may appear to promote affordability, it is impractical for developments that do not receive direct financial subsidies and would likely deter residential development altogether in communities that adopt such requirements. In practice, the bill would allow municipalities to avoid their obligation to provide affordable housing while increasing overall reliance on the state to provide significant financial subsidies.

The General Assembly has made meaningful progress in advancing housing availability and affordability under both House and Senate leadership in recent years and we commend these efforts. However, **H7447, H7565, H7659** run counter to the state’s housing goals and the needs of Rhode Islanders.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to oppose these bills. As always, I am happy to answer any questions and can be reached at (401) 721-5680 ext. 104 or [mlodge@housingnetworkri.org](mailto:mlodge@housingnetworkri.org).

Respectfully,



Melina Lodge, MCP  
Executive Director