

Shelley T. Peterson
Councilwoman – Ward 14

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PROVIDENCE
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Member
Committee on State Legislative Affairs, Member

April 14, 2026

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

Dear Chair Casey and Committee Members,

I write to you today in strong support of House Bill H-8363, which would enable municipalities to implement licensing for off-campus student housing. The ward I represent, which borders Providence College, has seen unrestricted expansion by corporate developers and the replacement of dozens of modest single-family and multifamily homes with large, incongruous dwellings marketed to students and commanding rents unaffordable to other residents. The profits represented by these units have skyrocketed rents in the ward generally, displacing long-time residents and systemically changing the neighborhood fabric. While we empathize and understand that students need off-campus housing, the costliness and disregard driving this specific type of development lacks supportive measures to residents who have their quality of life severely compromised and is also not helpful to students who must deal with neighbor concerns. Students in this area often have few options in landlords to choose from and may pay, as detailed in the experience of one student who came to a public hearing to provide testimony, upwards of \$1200 per room with little recourse for owner accountability.

H-8363, through enabling annual or periodic registration under a pursuant ordinance, would neither punish students nor prevent student housing. It would exempt from licensing any housing owned, operated, directly controlled, or leased by an institution, providing an institution opportunity to consider student housing in full consideration of community impacts. Additionally, as a city with several postsecondary institutions, this legislation would assist us in understanding the expansion of said institutions and how they impact our housing needs related to affordability and density. It is necessary for us to have a big picture understanding of these needs for us to respond as a city to the affordability and density we're seeking to alleviate in Providence.

H-8363 is another step in being able to address the multi-faceted housing concerns we have in the city of Providence. As we continue to respond to these growing issues we must deal with related to expanded student housing, being able to create policy to allow cities and towns to prioritize infrastructure capacity, housing balance, and long-term community investment is essential.


Providence City Council

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In allowing student housing licensing by cities and towns, H-8363 would enable thoughtful regulation of student housing, enhance developer accountability, and protect neighborhood affordability. I urge your strong support and passage of it, knowing that it represents only one useful tool in the creation of neighborhoods in which all residents are protected, respected, safe, and able to thrive.

In support of this legislation, I will introduce a supporting resolution to the City Council at the April 16th meeting.

Sincerely,



Shelley T. Peterson
Councilwoman – Ward 14

Cc: Representative Kathleen Fogarty, First Vice Chair
Representative June Speakman, Second Vice Chair
Representative José F. Batista
Representative Lauren H. Carson
Representative Cherie L. Cruz
Representative Matthew S. Dawson
Representative Anthony J. DeSimone
Representative John G. Edwards
Representative Richard R. Fascia
Representative Jenni A. Furtado
Representative Raymond A. Hull
Representative David Morales
Representative Robert J. Quattrochi
Representative Tina L. Spears

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