



April 15, 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 H7296, H8033, and H8280

Dear Chairman Casey and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island, our member agencies, and the low and moderate income Rhode Islanders we seek to serve, I write in opposition of **H7296, H8033, and H8280**, legislation that would permit Tiverton, Johnson and Smithfield to set minimum parking requirements for low- and moderate-income housing units based on the availability of public transportation or off street parking.

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 only way to solve our housing crisis is to start building our way out of it.**

H7296, H8033, and H8280 are steps in the wrong direction, only re-affirming many of the local practices that have in fact been a primary driver of our housing crisis. As proposed within **H7296, H8033, and H8280**, the requirement that each studio, one bedroom and two bedroom low- and moderate-income housing unit provide two parking spaces is completely arbitrary and not correlated to any actual data about Rhode Island household formation and size. Over the last 10 years, RI has seen a steady decline in the average number of people per household, which can be attributed to a number of factors such as 1) young people waiting longer to merge households by marriage and/or partnership, 2) a decline in birthrates, and 3) more and more older adults outliving their spouse.

If the bill sponsors' primary concern is related to ensuring adequate parking for Johnston's residents when new homes are constructed, why do **H7296, H8033, and H8280** not apply broadly? We noted that as drafted **H7296, H8033, and H8280** only apply to low- and moderate-income housing units. There is no evidence that low- and moderate-income households have a greater number of vehicles than higher income households, yet the specific focus of these bills seem to suggest such a statement would be true.

Our sister nonprofit, the Community Housing Land Trust of RI (CHLT) serves as the state's largest certified monitoring agency. The vast majority of the portfolio of homes monitored by the CHLT are located outside of the State's urban core and in areas that do not have consistent and regular bus service.

In response to the frequent discussions during the development phase as it relates to the true need for parking, five years ago the CHLT began tracking the number of vehicles associated with applicant households. For the portfolio of for- rent studio, one bed and two-bedroom homes in the CHLT's portfolio the average number of cars per household was 1.17. For the portfolio of for- sale one- and two-bedroom homes, the average number of cars per household was only slightly higher at 1.43. Of the studio homes for rent, 100% of the households consisted of only one person and of the one bedroom homes for rent, 83% of the households consisted of only one person. Of for sale homes, 64% of the low- and moderate-income homes sold in 2025 were to households of one person.

Based on the data available, it would be wasteful and irresponsible to require two parking spaces for each of these homes because a large number of those parking spaces would be not be used on a regular basis and could be instead better utilized for common greenspace, recreational areas or left undisturbed. The establishment of arbitrary parking requirements also serves as an impediment to development of lots that cannot comply with the associated land requirements, which is counter productive to the General Assembly's efforts to respond to our state's urgent housing crisis.

For these reasons, we respectfully oppose **H7296, H8033, and H8280** and urge the Committee to hold them. 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