



**Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH**  
**Director**

**Department of Health**  
Three Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 711  
[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)

March 18, 2021

The Honorable Raymond A. Hull  
House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing  
State House  
82 Smith St.  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 5953 - HOUSE RESOLUTION CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY THE LOW AND MODERATE INCOME HOUSING ACT and  
H 5950 - HOUSE RESOLUTION CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY THE ENTIRE AREA OF LAND USE, PRESERVATION, DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT, AND REGULATION

Dear Chairman Hull:

I am writing in support of H 5953 and H 5950. H 5953 would create a 16-member special legislative study commission whose purpose it would be to make a comprehensive study on implementation of the *Low and Moderate Income Housing Act* in the State of Rhode Island. H 5950 would create a special legislative commission to study the entire areas of land use, preservation, production, development, housing, environment, and regulation.

Both resolutions align with the Governor's FY22 Budget which would establish:

1. A permanent funding stream for affordable and workforce housing through a new restricted receipt fund to encourage housing production and municipal housing development partnerships and
2. Comprehensive governance reforms, including modernization of the Housing Resources Commission and codification of the role of the Office of Housing and Community Development to improve statewide coordination of housing policy, planning, and financing.

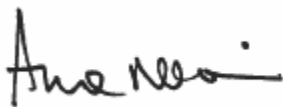
Housing is well understood to be an important social determinant of physical and mental health and well-being. Affordable housing alleviates crowding and makes more household resources available to pay for healthcare and healthy food, which leads to better health outcomes. High-quality housing limits exposure to environmental toxins that impact health. Stable and affordable housing also supports mental health by limiting stressors related to financial burden or frequent moves, or by offering an escape from an abusive home environment. Affordable housing can also serve as a platform for providing supportive services to improve the health of vulnerable populations, including older adults, people with disabilities, and homeless individuals and

families. Safe, decent, and affordable housing in neighborhoods of opportunity can also offer health benefits to low-income households.

Land-use planning and concern for the built environment originated from a public health focus. While many of the public health issues that plagued cities years ago have been resolved, the excessive application of automobile-oriented design and formulaic land use regulation has engineered behavior changes that give rise to new health concerns. Low-income populations remain in unhealthy concentrations, separated from jobs that have migrated to the suburbs because of inadequate public transportation. At the same time, low-income families are restricted from moving toward jobs in suburban jurisdictions that practice exclusionary zoning, a practice that imposes restrictions that outlaw apartments, smaller homes, and smaller lots that can be more affordable to low-wage workers. A number of health issues are associated with these conditions including, but not limited to, physical activity, air quality, water quality, traffic safety, loss of farmland or local production, and residential segregation.

Because affordable housing and land-use planning include such an important focus on protecting and promoting public health, the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) would welcome the opportunity to have a seat on both of these proposed study commissions. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Alexander-Scott".

for

Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH  
Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing  
The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable June Speakman  
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House