



March 3, 2026

The Honorable Louis DiPalma, Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House, 82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

Re: In Support of H-7127, Article 6, Question 2

Dear Chair DiPalma and Members of the Committee:

I am writing today **in support of Article 6, Question 2** in the Governor's proposed budget. This question proposes \$120 million to increase and preserve the availability of affordable and accessible housing, with at least \$25 million allocated towards homeownership. **I strongly urge the Committee to recommend increasing the proposed bond item to \$150 million** to support affordable rental housing production and preservation specifically for low- and moderate-income households, including dedicated funds to build permanent supportive housing units for extremely low-income residents exiting homelessness.

The Housing Network of Rhode Island is an alliance of organizations including housing developers, service providers, advocacy organizations, and more who share the vision that all Rhode Islanders live in safe, healthy, and affordable homes and thriving communities. Our network of nonprofit developers has developed more than 8,000 long-term affordable homes in 27 communities across Rhode Island. The 2006, 2012, 2016, 2021 and most recently 2024 housing bonds have been significant financial resources to enabling these homes to be developed.

Housing is the single best investment that we can make as a State and in our communities to strengthen our wellbeing and economy. It is foundational to our infrastructure, underpinning our ability to reduce homelessness, stay healthy, support strong educational outcomes, create a strong economy and a thriving workforce. When housing is inadequate, it shows up across all of our other systems.

Overall, 33% of all Rhode Island households (143,023) are considered cost burdened, meaning they are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Among homeowners, 26% are cost burdened. Thirty-two percent (32%) of renters, representing 51,596 households, are extremely low-income (as an example, an ELI household of three is earning about \$30,000 a year). It is crucial that housing bond funds be explicitly approved to produce and preserve affordable homes for low and moderate income Rhode Islanders, and that these investments be secured through long-term deed restrictions to ensure that long-term affordable housing remains affordable, and available, for future generations of eligible Rhode Islanders.

On behalf of the Housing Network and the organizations in our alliance, I commend the General Assembly and the Administration for allocating historic resources to advance the development of housing over the past five years. The opportunity before you will sustain that momentum and helps ensure the prosperity of all Rhode Islanders.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the Committee to support this budget article and question (Article 6, Question 2) and recommend **increasing the proposed amount to \$150 million to produce and preserve affordable homes for low and moderate income Rhode Islanders.**

I'm happy to answer any questions the Committee might have, please feel free to contact me at (401) 721-5680 ext. 104 or mlodge@housingnetworkri.org.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melina Lodge".

Melina Lodge, Executive Director