

March 3, 2026

Hon. Louis P. DiPalma
Chairperson, Senate Finance Committee, Rhode Island General Assembly
Email: sen-dipalma@rilegislature.gov; SenateFinance@rilegislature.gov

RE: SUPPORT FOR H 7127, Article 6 Question 2 – Housing and Home Ownership

Dear Chairperson DiPalma,

I am sending this letter to express support for Article 6, Question 2 in the Governor's proposed budget and to respectfully ask that the proposed bond item be increased to \$150 million to address the severe housing crisis we are experiencing in Rhode Island.

I direct a Housing Policy Clinic at Roger Williams University School of Law and have the great privilege to teach young people interested in supporting legislative solutions to the affordable housing crisis. Our clinic students partner with Rhode Island nonprofits and support their legislative research around some of the most urgent housing issues facing our state.

One of our goals in the clinic is to make sure we are teaching students about the human dimension of this crisis, and not only law and policy in the abstract. This past semester, the students and I attended the Homeless Memorial Service hosted by the Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness at Mathewson Street Church. It was a sobering and deeply moving experience for the students to face the magnitude of the loss suffered due to a lack of housing. It is one thing to read statistics, but it is quite another to be in the same room with the friends and loved ones of those whose lives have been tragically cut short. The fact that this is an annual event is a painful reminder of the larger community's desperate need for additional state resources to address the lack of affordable, safe and stable housing.

Unfortunately, multiple preventable weather-related deaths have already occurred in 2026, including of a mother and son who were living in their car. These are real people impacted by a set of very challenging metrics. The data from HousingWorks RI's 2025 Housing Factbook confirm the stark conditions that individuals and families in Rhode Island face when attempting to secure housing they can afford. Since 2018, housing costs in Rhode Island have increased by more than 60 percent, while wages have grown by less than 30 percent. Rhode Island's single-family home prices have increased at a record rate, far outpacing other parts of the country. Rental increases in Rhode Island are currently the highest in New England. In the Providence metro area, residents have had to contend with one of the highest year-over-year rent increases in the nation, with a 16.18% hike between March 2023 and March 2024. And the statewide rental vacancy rate is 2.6 percent, which is far below the 5-8 percent range considered healthy.

The Rhode Island General Assembly needs to be commended for the great strides taken in recent years to support the creation of affordable housing in our state, but much work remains, particularly on behalf of our most vulnerable residents. There are many residents for whom the private market alone will never provide an affordable option. Resources are needed for rental subsidies and interventions that prioritize providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness.

Voters demonstrated their support for the \$120 million bond in November of 2024 and can be expected to do so again. There is strong public support for addressing the housing crisis in Rhode Island; there are few among us who have not been impacted in one way or another. I hope you will choose to continue the great work you have started, and not only approve, but increase the bond amount to \$150 million.

My students came away from their clinical experience with a profound admiration for all the advocates, organizations, and elected officials, who are doing incredible work to ensure that every Rhode Islander has a safe place to call home. But these tireless efforts need to be matched by state resources. I hope for your support.

Respectfully submitted,



Monica Teixeira de Sousa