

4/28/2026

Senate Finance Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Written Testimony in Support of Senate Resolution S2676 (MAKING AN APPROPRIATION OF \$150,000 TO THE MAIN STREET RHODE ISLAND PROGRAM)

FROM: Kirk Brown

Dear Members of the Rhode Island Senate Finance Committee:

As a homeowner in South Kingstown, I write in strong support of continued state funding for Main Street Rhode Island, managed by Grow Smart RI in partnership with Main Street America. I am a participant in the 2026 RI Main Street Learning Cohort, and I urge the Committees to approve the \$150,000 appropriation enabled by H8316. This is one of the most cost-effective economic development investments the state can make.

Main Street Rhode Island launched immediately after the 2025 legislation passed and has grown with remarkable speed. In addition to ongoing free programs open to the entire state, Main Street RI has convened a group of eleven teams representing Main Street districts across ten cities and towns throughout the state for a 6-month training program. Experts from around the country are sharing strategies and case studies to help us replicate the beneficial economic and social outcomes that thousands of other communities around the country have realized through the implementation of the Main Street Approach. These teams bring together local government, neighborhood associations, community development nonprofits, and small business owners around a shared goal: stronger neighborhood commercial centers that serve residents, attract investment, and support local economies.

As a cohort member, I feel that the training our team receives through Main Street Rhode Island's formal partnership with Main Street America is essential to my community's efforts to strengthen South Kingstown. Without continued funding, that access ends. The expertise and framework our community has been building toward would be cut off at a critical point in our development.

Main Street Rhode Island has already been instrumental in helping South Kingstown's various community, volunteer, and small-business organizations come together to find common ground and help each other to champion the town that we love. Additionally, the programming which we have already started to engage with has helped many in our community, as well as other participating communities, realize the inefficiency of running competing town events; it is my hope that Main Street Rhode Island will continue to help facilitate more collaboration and cooperation between neighboring towns that will benefit everyone.

The Main Street America model carries a documented average return on investment of 22 to 1. The state's \$150,000 does not simply support a program; it catalyzes private spending, business development, and property reinvestment that would not otherwise occur. As we near the end of Year 1, cohort communities are already moving from learning to action, developing real projects with genuine economic potential.

Cutting off funding at this moment would forfeit the returns on an investment Rhode Island has already made and would sever our access to Main Street America's technical expertise at exactly the point when we are ready to put it to work. **I respectfully urge the Senate Finance Committee to approve the \$150,000 appropriation for Main Street Rhode Island in FY 2027.**

Thank you for your consideration. I invite you to contact me should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Kirk Brown

kilatsat@gmail.com

413-388-1299