

Town of Hopkinton, Rhode Island
1 Town House Road
Hopkinton, RI 02833

April 29, 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: HOPKINTON MAIN STREET RI COHORT

Dear Chairman DiPalma and Members of the Rhode Island Senate Finance Committee:

As a member of the Hopkinton Main Street RI Cohort, 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 S2676. 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 the Town of Hopkinton. 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.

The Main Street RI program has assisted Hopkinton in gaining information on downtown village design, steps to bolster local economic vitality, promotion of our local small businesses to both residents and visitors, and how to organize all these elements into an economic development

strategy that will retain and grow our existing small businesses and potentially recruit new businesses into our vacant building spaces.

Hopkinton's next steps are to study the entire Hopkinton Main Street corridor, from Hope Valley (and the Richmond town line) to Hopkinton City and into Ashaway. This Main Street stretch spans several miles and connects villages that are vital to Hopkinton's Main Street economy and character. This study will examine pedestrian access, storefront visibility and aesthetics, along with potential physical improvements. We will also study visitor demographics and foot traffic to understand where they have come from and their ultimate destinations.

It was remarkably interesting and refreshing to learn that Hopkinton is not alone in our need for local Main Street economic attention and study. We have listened to stories from our neighboring South County towns of Richmond, South Kingstown, and North Kingstown and realize that we share many of the same issues, and in some cases can partner with them to form a regional town plan. The Main Street RI program has given us this opportunity to collaborate.

If the Main Street RI program is no longer funded, Hopkinton would lose the continued support from this program with governance, training, consultation, and resource sharing that they bring from the National Main Street RI program and the Grow Smart RI organization. These professionals and their teams of experts have helped us to form a transformative plan that will have a tremendous impact on our community.

The Main Street America model carries a documented average return on investment of 24 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 are 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,

*Michelle McCrae, Member
Hopkinton Main Street RI Cohort
Hopkinton Economic Development Commission
michelle.mccrae@gmail.com
401-439-6310*