



May 7, 2026

The Honorable Louis DiPalma, Chairperson
Senate Finance Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: S2681- AN ACT RELATING TO STATE-FUNDED RENTAL SUBSIDY PROGRAM

Dear Chairperson and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Association of REALTORS® (RIAR), we respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to S2681. RIAR represents more than 5,900 licensed real estate professionals who list, sell, lease, manage, and appraise residential and commercial real estate to make Rhode Island a better place to call home.

S2681 is a thoughtful and targeted investment in housing stability, bringing much needed relief to tenants during such challenging times economically. By tailoring rental assistance to household income and focusing resources on those most vulnerable, the legislation creates a practical pathway from homelessness to long-term housing security.

Addressing the Root Cause of Homelessness

At its core, S2681 responds to a structural affordability gap that leaves extremely low-income households without viable rental options.

- Aligns rental assistance with household income rather than development-based AMI thresholds.
- Prioritizes individuals and families exiting homelessness.
- Supports households with long-term disabilities who require stable community-based housing.

By restricting rent to 30% of household income, the program establishes affordability that is both predictable and sustainable, creating a stable foundation for Rhode Islanders working to regain housing security.

Maximizing the Impact of State Dollars

S2681 provides a deliberate \$25 million investment to establish the program and authorizes multi-year commitments for project-based rental assistance. This structure provides predictability for housing providers while ensuring accountability for public funds by:

- Maximizes the effectiveness of federal Continuum of Care funding.
- Mitigates reliance on emergency shelters and crisis services.
- Creates stable revenue streams that support permanent housing projects.
- Allows thoughtful layering with federal housing resources.

By pairing state resources with existing federal investments, project-based assistance strengthens long-term housing partnerships and preserves deeply affordable units for households with the greatest need.

Prioritizing Stability and Equitable Access

S2681 centers housing stability by directing the administering agency to implement the program in a manner that does not inadvertently exclude households facing the greatest barriers to securing housing.

- Caps tenant rent contributions at no more than 30% of household income.
- Requires compliance with HUD's National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate to ensure safe and habitable units.
- Reinforces nondiscrimination protections, including safeguards related to lawful sources of income.

Together, these provisions promote both program integrity and equitable access, resulting in more durable housing outcomes across Rhode Island.

Community and Market Impact

Housing instability affects more than individual households. It impacts neighborhoods, property values, municipal resources, and local economies. By creating a reliable pathway to stable housing, S2681 will:

- Reduce strain on emergency shelters and crisis systems
- Improve neighborhood stability and continuity
- Promote responsible property management
- Fosters long-term community investment

A more stable rental landscape strengthens confidence in the housing market and delivers shared benefits to property owners, tenants, municipalities, and communities across Rhode Island.

A Strategic Investment in Housing Stability

S2681 represents a strategic housing investment that delivers measurable policy outcomes. The legislation is structured to:

- Leverage existing federal resources
- Direct assistance to households with the greatest need
- Help prevent escalating public costs associated with chronic homelessness
- Reinforce Rhode Island's housing infrastructure

Taken together, these elements position the bill as a coordinated and durable response to a persistent statewide housing challenge.

Conclusion

The Rhode Island Association of REALTORS® supports S2681 as a measured and strategic investment in housing stability. By aligning rental assistance with actual household income and prioritizing those most at risk, the legislation provides a meaningful pathway from homelessness to permanent housing.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge favorable consideration of S2681.

Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to addressing Rhode Island's housing challenges.

Respectfully submitted,



Trevor J. Chasse
Government Affairs Director
Rhode Island Association of REALTORS®