



May 5, 2026

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

Re: In Support of S-2828

Dear Chair DiPalma and Members of the Committee:

HNRI is a statewide alliance of members and partners serving low-income Rhode Islanders, who share the vision that all Rhode Islanders live in safe, healthy, affordable homes in thriving communities. Our alliance includes 20 nonprofit housing developers who own and operate more than 7,500 rental homes for low- and moderate-income Rhode Islanders, as well as organizations who provide support and other services to the more than 2,500 Rhode Islanders who are experiencing homelessness. I am writing to express support for S-2828, the RI Works full package, which would restore eligibility for Legal Permanent Residents, increase monthly benefits to 100% of the Federal Poverty Level, increase the child support pass-through to \$100/\$200, and eliminate the \$65 housing deduction for families living in subsidized housing.

Since 2020, rents in Rhode Island have risen nearly 20%, while wages only grew about four percent (4%). In 2025, the average rent and utilities for a two-bedroom apartment was \$2,385 per month, requiring a wage of more than \$45 an hour, nearly three times the state minimum wage, to avoid cost burden. Even families living in subsidized housing routinely spend over 30% of their income on housing costs, leaving dangerously little for food, transportation, childcare, and medical needs. Affordability for Rhode Islanders has been a shared priority for Rhode Island legislators and the Administration, and this bill carries forward that commitment.

We write with urgency about a specific provision of S-2828: the elimination of the \$65 housing deduction for families living in subsidized housing. Under current law, Rhode Island automatically reduces the RI Works benefit by \$65 for these families, even as all other costs continue to rise. This is a penalty on families who are working, budgeting carefully, and trying to maintain stable housing. Housing stability should not be penalized, yet this monthly reduction of benefits does that. Putting this money back into families' pockets means these households would have an additional \$780 per year to use for essentials like baby formula, medication, or transportation costs to get to work and appointments.

The broader RI Works package addresses longstanding gaps in our state's safety net. Restoring eligibility for Legal Permanent Residents recognizes that working families who have built their lives in Rhode Island deserve the same basic support as their neighbors. Increasing monthly benefits to 100% of the Federal Poverty Level reflects the reality that current benefit levels have not kept pace with the actual cost of living. Increasing the child support pass-through ensures that more money reaches children directly. Together, these reforms would strengthen Rhode Island families, reduce child poverty, and support parents' ability to remain stably housed and employed.

Rhode Island is at a critical juncture where urgent action is needed to address our housing crisis and support the families most vulnerable to its consequences. S-2828 is an evidence-based, values-driven step in the right direction. We respectfully urge the Committee to advance this legislation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie West".

Katie West, Director of Strategic Partnerships
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