



*Distinctive Communities  
Powerful Alliance*

April 2, 2026

The Honorable Jacob Bissaillon, Chair  
Senate Housing and Municipal Government  
Rhode Island Senate  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: SENATE BILL 2265 – AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- ZONING ORDINANCES

Dear Chair Bissaillon and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, representing all 39 municipalities across the state, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony regarding this legislation.

We want to begin by acknowledging the importance of addressing Rhode Island's housing challenges. Expanding housing opportunities, promoting affordability, and encouraging thoughtful growth are goals shared by municipalities across the state. Local officials are on the front lines of this issue and are actively working to increase housing production in ways that are consistent with community needs, infrastructure capacity, and long-term planning objectives.

At the same time, we respectfully offer concerns with the proposed amendments to § 45-24-33(d), specifically the provision establishing statewide maximums for minimum lot sizes in residential zoning.

While the legislation preserves the framework of local zoning authority in form, it substantively limits municipal discretion by imposing uniform caps on minimum lot sizes. This represents a significant shift away from the longstanding principle of local control over land use decisions, an authority that cities and towns rely upon to align development patterns with infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, and community character.

Municipalities across Rhode Island vary widely in terms of density, geography, infrastructure availability, and development patterns. A one-size-fits-all standard, particularly one that allows for minimum lot sizes as small as 2,500 square feet in proximity to transit and 5,000 square feet in areas served by public water and sewer, may not adequately account for these differences. In many communities, such changes would effectively result in substantial upzoning without consideration of local conditions or planning frameworks.

We are also concerned about the practical implications of this provision. Increased density, while beneficial in appropriate contexts, must be carefully coordinated with the capacity of local infrastructure systems, including roads, water, wastewater, schools, and stormwater management. The legislation does not provide mechanisms to ensure that such capacity exists prior to development, nor does it include resources to assist municipalities in addressing potential impacts.

Additionally, the requirement that each city and town amend its zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan to conform to these standards will create administrative and financial burdens for local governments, many of which are already operating with limited planning staff and resources.

We respectfully suggest that a more flexible approach, one that establishes state-level goals while allowing municipalities to tailor implementation based on local conditions, would better achieve the shared objective of increasing housing production. Providing incentives, technical assistance, or infrastructure support may be more effective than imposing uniform mandates.

In closing, we remain committed to working collaboratively with policymakers and stakeholders to advance policies that meaningfully address Rhode Island's housing needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'R.R.R.', written in dark ink.

Randy R. Rossi  
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of Senate Housing and Municipal Government