Senate Housing and Municipal Government Committee
March 23, 2026
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Subject: Support S 2691 — Low and Moderate Income Housing

Dear Chairman Bissaillon and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully urge the Committee to adopt S 2691. I commend the sponsor of this important legislation, Senator Victoria Gu, and the co-sponsors — Senators Euer, DiMario, Murray, and Burke — for their leadership in recognizing the need to reform Rhode Island's Low and Moderate Income (LMI) Housing Act to encourage more responsible housing development.

This bill provides common-sense amendments to accommodate low and moderate income housing without negatively impacting the quantity or quality of Rhode Island's precious and irreplaceable drinking water supplies.

The current LMI Act allows density bonuses of up to 8 housing units per acre in areas that sit on top of aquifers and recharge zones that are the sole source of our community's drinking water. Depending on the underlying zoning and the percentage of market-rate units, these density increases can range from 200% to 2,400% — and that does not include the potential for accessory dwelling units on each lot or for units to be duplexes. These are extraordinarily excessive density bonuses.

RI DEM Onsite Wastewater Treatment System rules focus on individual system compliance rather than cumulative impact analysis. While designed to prevent individual failures, they fail to address the collective, long-term nutrient loading from high-density, individual septic systems on groundwater and coastal watersheds. Cumulative impacts are addressed by municipal zoning, but the current LMI Act overrules a town's zoning.

I support the need for more low and moderate income housing in Rhode Island. However, housing must be developed in ways that do not pollute our drinking water or overtax limited groundwater supplies. Rhode Island must have clean, safe, and sustainable drinking water to support existing residents and encourage future growth and economic development. The future prosperity of our state depends on it. I urge the Committee to adopt this bill and to consider extending protection to both GAA and GA waters.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Geoffrey Weiss
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Charlestown, RI 02813

Cc: Senate President Lawson, State Representative Tina Spears, State Senator Elaine Morgan ,

State Senator Victoria Gu, State Representative Megan Cotter