



Executive Office of Housing
State of Rhode Island
One Capitol Hill, 3rd Floor
Providence, RI 02908

April 9, 2026

The Honorable Jacob Bissaillon, Chair
Senate Housing and Municipal Government Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: S 2912

Dear Chairman Bissaillon:

The Executive Office of Housing (“EOH”) is pleased to submit this letter in support of S 2912, which proposes amendments to the existing abandoned property law. These changes would help address instances where the law has been misused to acquire properties at low cost for resale. This bill includes six important amendments:

- (1) Exempts RIHousing from the statute. As a quasi-public agency whose mission is to develop and preserve affordable housing, RIHousing falls outside of the intended targets for this statute. It is not uncommon for RIHousing to hold an ownership interest in vacant or distressed properties for a period of time as they work through the legal and financing steps needed to return them to productive use. In all cases, RIHousing diligently secures and maintains these properties in compliance with state and local requirements and remains subject to any applicable fines or penalties for violations of minimum housing standards.
- (2) Limits eligible properties to those already included in the annual municipal inventory of abandoned property required under RIGL 34-44-1.1. Limiting this tool to properties on the municipal inventory ensures that some due diligence has been conducted to confirm the properties are vacant and have documented violations. Additionally, municipalities are required to notify listed owners, providing them with clear notice of the property’s issues and the potential consequences of inaction.
- (3) Clarifies the conditions that must be met before a receiver can be appointed. The law should be amended to clarify that petitions require both documented code violations and evidence that the owner has failed to address them.

- (4) Clarifies the conditions under which the shorter notice period can be utilized to address public safety issues. The statute should be amended to clearly define the conditions required to meet the public safety standard, such as serious building code violations or formal condemnation.
- (5) Clarifies that a receiver cannot be appointed without notice and a hearing. The law should be amended to make clear that a temporary or permanent receiver cannot be appointed without notice and a hearing.
- (6) Limits priority consideration to parties willing to designate and deed restrict the property for low-and moderate-income housing. Currently, priority is given not only to affordable housing development but also to parties reselling properties at least 10% below appraised value, designating units for housing voucher programs, or restricting owner occupancy for at least two years. EOH believes affordable housing development should be prioritized.

EOH strongly supports these proposed amendments, which would reinforce the statute's intended purpose: providing a pathway to return abandoned, nuisance properties to productive use. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments and welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee and bill sponsors as this proposal moves forward.

Sincerely,



Deborah J. Goddard
Secretary of Housing

CC: The Honorable Members of the Senate Housing and Municipal Government Committee
Kristin Silvia, Director of Legislation and Deputy Chief of Staff
Steven Hayes, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Senate President