

April 9, 2026

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

RE: SENATE BILL 2912 – AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY -- ABANDONED PROPERTY

Dear Chair Bissaillon and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we write to express our support for Senate Bill 2912, which proposes important updates to the definitions of “abandoned property” and “public nuisance” under Rhode Island law. We would also like to thank the bill’s sponsor for their thoughtful leadership in bringing forward this legislation and for their commitment to addressing this important issue in a balanced and constructive manner.

Rhode Island’s abandoned-property statute (RIGL 34-44) establishes a court-based framework that enables municipalities, certain nonprofit organizations, and, in some cases, neighboring property owners to intervene when a structure becomes abandoned and poses a threat to public safety. Through the appointment of a receiver, this process allows for the rehabilitation of distressed properties and their return to productive use. This statute has long served as a valuable tool for municipalities working to stabilize neighborhoods, preserve property values, and protect residents.

However, in recent years, the absence of clearly defined standards for what qualifies as an “abandoned” or “public nuisance” property has created opportunities for misuse. In some instances, large numbers of properties have been included in receivership petitions without sufficient verification that they meet the statutory criteria. This has led to situations in which property owners, sometimes unaware that their property is under review, are drawn into costly legal proceedings or face the potential loss of their property through expedited court action. These circumstances also place added strain on municipal staff and complicate the effective administration of the law.

Senate Bill 2912 seeks to address these concerns by establishing clearer criteria and procedural safeguards. The legislation requires that any property subject to receivership be included on a municipality’s existing inventory of abandoned properties. It further clarifies that a property must have received a formal notice of violation from the appropriate authority, and that the owner must have failed to remedy those violations within the prescribed timeframe, before receivership proceedings may be initiated. Additionally, the bill strengthens due process protections by ensuring that property owners receive proper notice of any petition and are afforded an opportunity to be heard prior to the appointment of a receiver.

From a municipal perspective, these changes provide important clarity and reinforce appropriate safeguards. By ensuring that only truly abandoned or unsafe properties are subject to receivership, the legislation enables cities and towns to better direct their limited resources while reducing administrative burdens and minimizing the potential for legal disputes. At the same time, it supports ongoing efforts to revitalize communities and return neglected properties to productive use.

For these reasons, the League supports Senate Bill 2912 and respectfully urges the Committee to approve its passage. This legislation represents a thoughtful and balanced approach that strengthens municipal tools, enhances due process for property owners, and promotes the responsible redevelopment of abandoned properties for the benefit of communities across Rhode Island.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Rossi', written in a cursive style.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of Senate Housing and Municipal Government