



April 9th, 2026

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

Re: Senate Bill 2912

Dear Chair Bissaillon, Vice Chair DiMario, Secretary Rogers, and Distinguished Committee Members,

The Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (“RIHousing”) strongly supports Senate Bill 2912, *An Act Relating to Property – Abandoned Property*. This legislation refines Rhode Island’s Abandoned Property Act to ensure the Law is used as intended: to help address genuinely abandoned and unsafe properties, while protecting the rights of responsible property owners.

Rhode Island General Laws 34-44 was designed to serve as an important tool for municipalities, certain nonprofits, and neighboring landowners to intervene when a building becomes abandoned, unsafe, or in violation of building or minimum housing codes. In such cases, the law allows the court to appoint a receiver to address these issues and return properties to productive use.

However, in recent years, the absence of clear statutory standards has enabled the misuse of this process. Some entities have filed large petitions sweeping in dozens of properties at once – often without confirming whether the homes are actually abandoned or blighted.

RIHousing’s direct experience underscores the seriousness of this problem. We first became aware of this issue when three homeowners with RIHousing mortgages found their properties included on one of these petitions. All of the homes had been purchased relatively recently and were in good condition with no code violations or other infractions.

RIHousing owned properties have also been included in petitions under the Abandoned Properties Act. In each of the cases the property was being maintained and was actively in the process of being redeveloped or sold to a new owner. None of the properties were the subject of code violations or complaints. In one case involving a property that RIHousing was in the process of selling to a developer for redevelopment as affordable housing, the receiver was appointed and the locks on the building were changed before the agency was even notified that there was an issue. Attached to this testimony is a handout with more information and pictures of a few of the properties with RIHousing connections that have been targeted by petitions under the Act.

But properties associated with RIHousing represent only a tiny fraction of those that are listed on these kinds of petitions. Many other property owners who are living in and maintaining their homes, have undoubtedly found themselves pulled into similar receivership proceedings, incurring legal expenses and even losing control of their own property through no fault of their own.

Senate Bill 2912 addresses these issues with thoughtful and measured reforms that tighten the statute to ensure that the properties targeted through the process are indeed abandoned or problem properties and that owners are given adequate notice and the opportunity to address any issues before a receiver is appointed.

First, the bill requires that any property included in a petition under the abandoned property statute must appear on the municipal inventory of abandoned properties. This inventory is already required by law and ensures that some effort has been undertaken to determine that the properties are in fact vacant and have documented violations.

Second, the bill clarifies the definitions of “abandoned” and “public nuisance.” Under the proposed language, a property must have been the subject of an official notice of violation that the owner failed to address in the allotted time frame. This will help to ensure that petitioners undertake the due diligence required to target the kinds of properties this law was intended to address.

Third, the bill makes it clear that before a receiver is appointed, the owner should first receive notice of the filing and be provided an opportunity for a hearing. This restores due process under the statute and would allow owners who may have been inappropriately targeted by the petition to avoid the additional legal costs associated with removing their property from receivership.

Finally, the bill exempts RIHousing from the statute in recognition of our unique role as a quasi-public agency tasked with a range of responsibilities involving real estate, from providing mortgages to first-time homebuyers to preserving and developing affordable housing. RIHousing is currently servicing over 24,700 single family mortgages and 800 multi-family mortgages in Rhode Island. In 2025 alone we financed the production or preservation of almost 1,200 units in 20 developments across the State. We touch properties at every stage: during their development, while they are being actively occupied, and in periods of transition such as foreclosure or redevelopment. Unfortunately, we have had to deal with properties being needlessly targeted under this statute in every one of those stages resulting in significant delays, added cost, and stalled property redevelopment.

These reforms represent a balanced update of the Abandoned Property Act that preserves the receivership process as a valuable tool for returning blighted properties to productive use, while preventing abuse of the statute.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill 2912.

Sincerely,



Carol Ventura,  
Executive Director, RIHousing





## **47 Superior Street, Providence**

- Had a previous fire, but the property was completely rehabilitated in February 2022
- November, 2022: Purchased by a first-time homebuyer with a RIHousing mortgage
- June 2023: Included in a petition for receivership
- Property was occupied with no code violations or blighting conditions when petition for receivership was made. The homeowner was current on the mortgage.
- RIHousing was notified of the petition and our attorney was able to get the receiver to remove the property from receivership based on the evidence provided. Legal fees were absorbed by RIHousing.

*Photos from appraisal on 10/31/2022*



## **60 Heath Avenue, Warwick**

- May 15, 2023: Purchased by a first-time homebuyer with a RIHousing mortgage
- June 22, 2023: Included in a petition for receivership
- Appraisal shows good condition, with new bath, kitchen and deck within the last year.
- The borrower occupied the property at purchase. The loan was current at the time of the notice of receivership. There were no notices of code violations.
- RIHousing was notified of the petition and our attorney was able to get the receiver to remove the property from receivership based on the evidence provided. Legal fees were absorbed by RIHousing.

*Photos from appraisal on 3/17/2023*



## **131 Greeley Street, Pawtucket**

- March 31, 2023: Purchased by a first-time homebuyer with a RIHousing mortgage
- June 22, 2023: Included in a petition for receivership
- The RIHousing borrower took occupancy at the time of closing.
- RIHousing was notified of the petition and our attorney was able to get the receiver to remove the property from receivership based on the evidence provided. Legal fees were absorbed by RIHousing.

*Photos from appraisal on 3/8/2023*



## 179 Columbine Avenue, Pawtucket

- April 24, 2025: RIHousing foreclosed on this FHA insured property
- The property was occupied by the owners at the time of foreclosure. They vacated the property on July 1, 2025 and RIHousing conducted a clean-up of the interior and exterior of the property to prepare it for conveyance to HUD.
- As required for FHA insured mortgages, the property was conveyed to HUD on September 11, 2025
- October 23, 2025: HUD listed the property for sale.
- October 28, 2025: Included in a petition for receivership
- RIHousing informed the petitioner that we no longer had ownership of the property

*Photos reflect property condition at the time of conveyance to HUD on September 13, 2025*