

H O U S I N G



N E T W O R K

April 5, 2022

**Senator Frank Lombardo, III
Chairman, Senate Committee on Housing and Municipal Government
Rhode Island Statehouse
Providence, RI 02903**

RE: In support of SB2623

Dear Chairman Lombardo and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island, our member agencies, and the low income Rhode Islanders we seek to serve, I write in support of SB2623, legislation that revises the definition of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU), how units could be utilized and reduces barriers to their creation.

The Housing Network of Rhode Island is the State's membership association of 17 nonprofit community development agencies across Rhode Island. From Washington County to Woonsocket, our members have created more than 15,000 affordable homes. Our members are leaders within the communities they serve and have contributed to economic development, revitalization efforts, and the creation of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods in cities and towns throughout Rhode Island. The membership of HNRI is responsible for nearly 70% of the production and preservation of affordable homes made possible by funding from the 2006, 2012, and 2016 affordable housing bonds. Our organization and membership are committed to serving low income Rhode Islanders, who are vital contributors to our economy and have the right to safe, healthy, and affordable places to live.

We thank Senator Kallman and the bill's co-sponsors for their introduction of this very important bill. SB2623 has the potential to increase the production and availability of housing stock by utilizing ADUs as one solution for Rhode Island to meet the rising and urgent demands for more housing. There are some technical corrections and points of clarification that I wanted to share with the Committee and have already been shared with the bill sponsor. I've highlighted our suggested changes below:

- 1. In several places in the bill there is reference to "excessive restrictions" and "unreasonable requirements" but there is no formal definition or parameters that lay out what restrictions or requirements would constitute "excessive" or "unreasonable".**
- 2. Section 45-24-75 (1) makes reference to income eligibility of a household but there no language that talks about what party is responsible for providing that. Our recommendation is that the income certification is handled by an approved Monitoring Agent.**
- 3. Section 45-24-75 (3) is not clear as to which party (property owner or Monitoring Agent) is required to provide the annual certification information to RI Housing. Our recommendation**

is that it is the responsibility of the Monitoring Agent to ensure consistent and accurate reporting.

4. In order to uphold the integrity of our affordable housing stock and ensure that we simply do not get into the habit of labeling units as “affordable” without meeting the metrics of the State’s definition, we believe further refinement is needed on section Section 45-24-75 (3)(b) with regards to how these units would be counted towards a municipalities LMIH count. Given that these units would not be encumbered by a Deed Restriction, as is currently required per the state’s definition, do not believe that an ADU should count as a full LMIH unit, but could be supportive of a partial count (such as 0.5).

We will continue to work with the bill sponsor on the proposed Sub-A with the goal of refining and clarifying the above referenced items. Thank you for the opportunity to share my expertise on this topic with this Committee and for your consideration of SB2623. I am available to answer any questions you might have and can be reached at 401-721-5680 ext. 38 or mlodge@housingnetworkri.org.

Respectfully submitted,



Melina Lodge, MCP
Executive Director