



March 18, 2025

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
Chair, House Judiciary
Rhode Island State House, 82 Smith Street, Providence RI 02903

Re: In Support of House Bill 5503 – *An Act Relating to Property – Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (Just Cause Evictions)*

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the Committee:

The mission of the Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI) is to increase the supply of safe, healthy, and affordable homes in thriving communities. We currently have 18 nonprofit developer members who own and operate more than 7,000 rental homes for low- and moderate-income Rhode Islanders. We also serve as the backbone for Homes RI, a coalition of more than 80 organizations who support our mission to increase the supply of and access to affordable homes. I write to you today in support of H-5503, legislation that establishes grounds of just cause for the eviction of a tenant. We appreciate Representative Cruz for her leadership on this issue.

Our state's housing needs are well-documented. This winter, we experienced multiple events of extreme, life-threatening cold weather while homelessness was (and still is) at an all-time high. Rhode Islanders' housing costs, including rent, insurance, and essential utilities have continued to rise as we face a down turning economy with increasing upward pressures on households with incomes that aren't keeping pace.

We applaud the state leaders for taking action to increase housing supply through investments and policies that ease regulatory barriers to development. To speed up our progress and expand our bandwidth to address our state's housing needs, we must continue these policies in conjunction with low-cost measures that promote housing stability, such as just cause legislation that would help to prevent arbitrary evictions of tenants who are otherwise in good standing.

In reviewing the legislation, we respectfully offer some suggestions for further clarification within the bill. In section 34-18-7.1 (5), we recommend adding more specific language to this exemption that ensures there no conflicts between the provisions of the chapter and any requirements prescribed by federal regulations or financial authorities as a condition of providing either restricted rents or occupant income restrictions.

Secondly, if the intent of the language in 34-18-38.3 (b)(3) is to preserve the same rights that a tenant has to stay an issuance of an execution as in the section above, that could be made more clear with minor modifications to the language.

Thank you to the honorable members of the Committee for consideration of my comments. As always, I am happy to answer any questions and can be reached at 401-721-5680 ext. 104 or mlodge@housingnetworkri.org.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melina Lodge".

Melina Lodge, Executive Director