HOUSING NETWORK OF RHODE ISLAND

HOMES RI

2025

LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

Overview

As an organization dedicated to increasing the supply of safe, healthy and affordable homes, we are encouraged to see continued commitment from the General Assembly to address our state's housing needs.

Throughout the 2025 legislative session, the Housing Network of Rhode Island and Homes RI championed a slate of bills aimed at expanding housing production, streamlining development processes, strengthening tenant protections, and improving housing stability.

These wins, combined with key homelessness initiatives included in the FY26 state budget, are important steps forward as Rhode Island seeks to address its housing crisis.

We are deeply grateful to the many community partners whose advocacy efforts helped successfully pass these key policies and budget provisions this legislative session.

The Housing Network and Homes RI reaffirmed our policy priorities during a Legislative Event at the State House on May 13, 2025, with more than 60 people in attendance.

We look forward to working alongside legislators, state agencies and community stakeholders in the 2026 legislative session to continue to make Rhode Island a place where all its residents have access to safe, decent affordable housing.

Read on for more in-depth information about the many housing-related bills tracked this legislative session.

Our top five housing wins from the 2025 legislative session

1 Standardized tax assessments

We championed H-5698/S-499, which establishes standards for tax assessments of deed-restricted low and moderate income homes for sale. Thank you to the sponsors, Rep. Fogarty & Sen. McKenney.

2 Speaker Shekarchi's housing package

Ten bills in Speaker Shekarchi's package of housing legislation have been signed into law. We were especially proud to have championed H-5801/S-1088 to encourage more affordable housing development across Rhode Island.

Details on these bills and budget provisions are provided on pages 3-8 of this report.

3 Budget provisions for housing and homelessness

The FY26 budget created a new, dedicated funding stream for housing and homelessness initiatives. It also increased the real estate conveyance tax on high-value properties, allocating revenue to the Housing Resources and Homelessness Fund and Housing Production Fund.

4 Housing and Conservation Trust Fund

H-5310/S-711 restructures and revives the Rhode Island Housing and Conservation Trust Fund. Co-championed with the Rhode Island Land Trust Council.

5 Immigration status protections

We supported H-5674/S-275, which prohibits a landlord from inquiring about the immigration status of a tenant subject to any federal laws or regulations, but may request financial information or proof of identity.

HOUSING NETWORK OF RHODE ISLAND

HOMES RI

Jan. - June '25

ADVOCACY REVIEW

90+
partners & supporters

405
bills tracked

We took a formal position on
156
bills

224+
housing-related news stories tracked

We provided oral or written testimony on
120
bills

12
press releases and open letters by HNRI and Homes RI

2
advocacy events hosted by HNRI and Homes RI

7
action alert emails shared

23
news stories mentioning HNRI and Homes RI

114+
news stories mentioning HNRI and Homes RI partners

Scan for the full list of housing bills we tracked during the session and links to our written testimony documents:

TO LEARN MORE & JOIN OUR CAUSE:
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The **Housing Network of Rhode Island** is the state's membership organization for agencies committed to the development of affordable housing and vibrant communities. The Housing Network serves as the backbone organization for **Homes RI**, a coalition of organizations working together to increase and preserve the supply of safe, healthy, affordable homes throughout Rhode Island.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

FY26 Housing & Homelessness Provisions

The Housing Network and Homes RI are grateful for the critical provisions to support homelessness initiatives included within the Fiscal Year 2026 State Budget. With Federal State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF) spending winding down by the end of 2026 and growing uncertainty surrounding future federal housing support, Rhode Island must strengthen its state-level investments to meet its urgent housing needs.

The voter-approved $120 million housing bond from November 2024 offers a vital opportunity to expand the availability of long-term affordable homes. This year's budget expands on existing revenue streams for supporting homelessness services and shelter bed capacity by increasing the real estate conveyance tax, establishing a hotel tax on whole-home short term rentals, a high value home tax and dedicating general revenues to homelessness initiatives.

Rep. June Speakman, Charlie Thomas-Davison (Women's Development Corp.), Colin Penney (South County Habitat for Humanity), Melina Lodge (HNRI), Joseph Garlick (NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley) and Christian Belden (Church Community Housing Corp.) celebrate the launch of Community Development Month on April 8, 2025.

We know that state leaders faced difficult choices amid tight fiscal constraints, competing priorities, and uncertain federal support, and are so appreciative that the FY26 budget acknowledges the importance of sustained investment in housing and homelessness services. The work is far from over, but we're inspired by the continued progress we have seen over the last five years and thank the General Assembly for their commitment to this issue. We look forward to working alongside legislators, advocates, and community members to build a Rhode Island where everyone can afford to live in the community of their choice.

H-5076, Budget Article 5, Sections 4 & 7

Whole-home short-term rentals

- Establishes a new, dedicated funding stream to provide for housing and homelessness initiatives by closing the hotel tax loophole.
- This would apply the 5% hotel tax to whole-home short-term rentals. The tax currently applies to hotels, motels, and partial-home short term rentals.

H-5076, Budget Article 5, Section 10

Real estate conveyance tax

- Increases the real estate conveyance tax on high-value properties.
- Would allocate revenue to the Housing Resources and Homelessness Fund and Housing Production Fund.

H-5076, Amendments to the FY 2026 Appropriations Act

Governance structure bill amendment

- Consolidates the programmatic and policy functions of the Housing Resources Commission into the Executive Office of Housing.
- Establishes the Secretary of Housing as the statutory chair of RIHousing, transferring the oversight and administration of the Housing Production Fund to the Executive Office of Housing.
- Establishes two interagency councils to advance policies, programs, and coordination for addressing housing and homelessness.
- Transfers the Housing Resources Commission's responsibilities for lead hazard mitigation to the RI Department of Health.

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

2025 Housing Legislation

405* BILLS TRACKED

* Includes both Senate & House bills

247 HOUSING-RELATED BILLS

- **14** BUDGET BILLS
- **144** BILLS RELATED TO ENERGY/ ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMIC SECURITY, VOTER ACCESS, UTILITIES, TRANSIT, TAXATION, SHORT-TERM RENTALS, CONDOS & MORE

✓ PASSED

✗ DID NOT PASS

Part of Speaker Shekarchi's Housing Legislation Package

H-5801 SUB A | S-1088

Low & Moderate Income Housing Act amendments

Sponsored by Rep. Speakman & Sen. Mack

✓ Furthers the work of the Affordable Housing Commission and implements feedback received by and from the commission. The legislation builds upon substantial amendments made to Rhode Island's Low and Moderate Housing Act in 2023. This legislation further clarifies standards and findings required for development to remove subjectivity in the process and further encourages the development of projects including at least 25% affordable housing across the state.

H-5698 | S-499

Standardized tax assessments of deed-restricted homes

Sponsored by Rep. Fogarty & Sen. McKenney

✓ Establishes standards for tax assessments of deed-restricted low and moderate income homes for sale, creating predictability for low-income homeowners who purchased long-term affordable homes.

H-5674 | S-274

Immigration status protections

Sponsored by Rep. Giraldo & Sen. Quezada

✓ Prohibits a landlord from inquiring about the immigration status of a tenant subject to any federal laws or regulations, but may request financial information or proof of identity.

H-5310 | S-711

Rhode Island Housing and Conservation Trust Fund Act

Sponsored by Rep. Speakman & Sen. Bissaillon

✓ Restructures the Rhode Island Housing and Conservation Trust Fund, increases its membership to 15 members, 11 of whom are to be from the general public and reallocates the percentage of the funds for housing, conservation and other goals.

H-5688 | S-963

Fair tax treatment of affordable housing developments

Sponsored by Rep. Speakman & Sen. Mack

✗ Would have clarified the application of the 8% tax rate for low income provided an 8% tax rate for those properties that are encumbered by a deed restriction for low-income housing set at 80% or 60% of adjusted median income established by HUD.

H-5800 | S-1090 SUB A

Village/mixed-use zoning requirements

Sponsored by Rep. Craven & Sen. Bissaillon

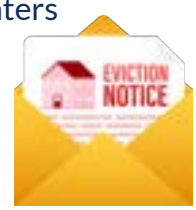
✓ Requires municipalities to provide for village or mixed-use zoning to allow residential use in some or all areas of their commercial zoning districts.

H-5503 | S-212

Just cause eviction protections

Sponsored by Rep. Cruz & Sen. Mack

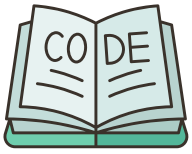
✗ Would have provided for just cause evictions for residential landlord tenancies; promoting housing stability by protecting renters from arbitrary, retaliatory, and/or discriminatory evictions and unreasonable rent increases. Complements investments and enacted policies aimed at addressing the housing crisis.



H-5804 SUB A | S-1089-SUB AAA

Building code

Sponsored by Speaker Shekarchi & Sen. Majority Leader Frank Ciccone



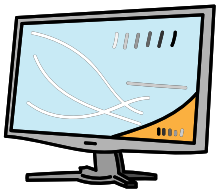
✓ Builds upon legislation introduced in last year's housing package which codified the structure of the State Building Code Office and clarified the role of the State Building Code Commissioner. This legislation provides additional clarity and centralize roles and quorums in order to further streamline the process and centralize duties related to building and fire codes and permitting. The bill also allows for the residential building code to apply to residential structures up to four units.

H-5803 SUB AAA | S-1087

Expansion of electronic permitting

Sponsored by Speaker Shekarchi & Sen. Britto

✓ Builds upon legislation introduced in last year's housing package to expand the use of electronic permitting, which is mandated for planning and zoning applications by October of this year. This legislation requires that applications for the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation utilize the e-permitting system by October 2026.



H-5798 SUB AAA | S-1083 SUB A

Attached single-family units

Sponsored by Rep. Speakman & Sen. Kallman

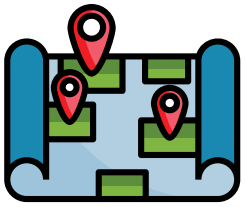
✓ Based on feedback from housing advocates regarding the demand for lower-cost home ownership opportunities, such as townhomes; this legislation would allow such type of units where zoning already allows the same density in a vertical style, by way of tenement or other two-, three-, or multi-family structures.

H-5795 SUB A | S-1084 SUB A

Reliance on zoning certificates

Sponsored by Rep. Spears & Sen. Gu

✓ Allows purchasers to reasonably rely on zoning opinions issued by local officials. Presently, when a property owner obtains a zoning certificate, the certificate is for instructive purposes only and not binding; this amendment would remove the non-binding nature of zoning certificates to allow property owners to rely on the municipal determination of the legality of the present use.



H-5802 SUB AAA | S-1093

Development of state-owned vacant properties for housing

Sponsored by Rep. Noret & Sen. Burke

✗ Would have leveraged data from the Commission to Study the Cost and Status of State-Owned Vacant Properties to review state-owned vacant and/or abandoned properties that may be utilized for housing opportunities. This legislation would have established a streamlined approval process to be used for such properties.

H-5794 SUB B | S-1086 SUB AAA

Technical amendments to Zoning Enabling Act and Subdivision Act

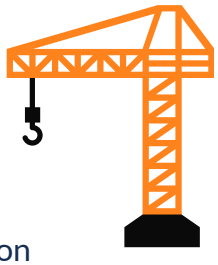
Sponsored by Rep. Craven & Sen. McKenney

✓ Based on feedback received from the Land Use Commission and various stakeholders, including local cities and towns, advocates, planners and developers. The legislation seeks to clarify the processes set forth in the Zoning Enabling Act and Subdivision Act and to correct issues that are creating unnecessary delays and/or red tape. Additionally, the requirements and process for conversions of commercial and industrial structures to residential are further clarified to continue to encourage projects to convert underutilized or vacant commercial buildings. This bill also would allow oversized lots to be subdivided if the resulting lots are equal to or greater than the lots in the immediate area. Additionally, the legislation would allow administrative modifications of certain dimensional requirements based on the average dimensional standard of the surrounding structures.

H-5793 SUB A | S-1091

Temporary exemptions from the tax levy cap to accommodate new housing

Sponsored by Rep. Corvese & Sen. Bissaillon



✓ Requested by the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, this legislation allows the taxes on new housing units to not be counted toward the maximum tax levy cap under certain conditions. The exemption would be contingent upon approval by the municipality and is only allowed where the new housing includes a portion of affordable units, among other criteria.

H-5797 SUB A | S-1085

Co-living housing

Sponsored by Rep. McEntee & Sen. Gu

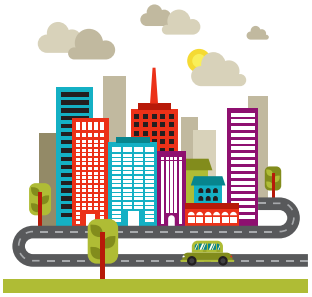
✓ Enables municipalities to allow for the use of co-housing arrangements as energy-efficient, low-cost housing options similar to dorms in which there are common spaces, amenities, and facilities, but residents have separate private bedrooms. This housing model has been adopted by other states for seniors and young professional as a cost-effective option while preserving the community environment.

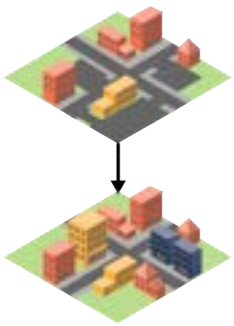
H-5796 SUB AA | S-1092

Higher density development

Sponsored by Rep. Knight & Sen. DiMario

✓ Designed to encourage additional development in areas within the urban services boundary. The legislation provides that the city or town shall allow residential uses other than solely single-family units in these areas where public water and sewer are available.





H-5799 SUB A | S-1052

Infill/oversized lot subdivisions

Sponsored by Rep. Cruz & Sen. Bissaillon

✗ Based on feedback presented to the Land Use Commission to take advantage of underutilized land in a community, this legislation would have allowed oversized lots to be subdivided if the resulting lots are equal to or greater than the lots in the immediate area. Additionally, the legislation would have allowed administrative modifications of dimensional requirements based on the average dimensional standard of the surrounding structures.

H-5185 | S-133 SUB A

Prohibition of unfair service agreements

Sponsored by Rep. Donovan & Sen. LaMountain

✓ Prohibits the use of service agreements that are unfair to an owner of residential real estate who enters into such an agreement or to persons who may become owners of that real estate in the future.

H-5953 | S-713 SUB A

Warming and cooling centers

Sponsored by Rep. Tanzi & Sen. Mack

✗ Would have provided for warming center and cooling center alerts to trigger certain procedures municipalities shall follow during extreme heat or cold to help at-risk individuals with resources.

H-5364 | S-213 SUB A

Notice for self storage facilities

Sponsored by Rep. Hull & Sen. Ciccone

✓ Amends notice requirements for self-storage facility before perfecting lien, to wit; seven consecutive days of publication on a publicly accessible website or subsequent written notice to lessee, or publication once time in newspaper of general circulation.

H-5955 SUB A | S-122 SUB AAA

Housing land bank program

Sponsored by Rep. Speakman & Sen. Kallman

✓ Establishes a program operated by the Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation called the "housing land bank" to create affordable housing

with the authority to buy, receive, and hold real property for housing development.

H-5229 SUB AAA | S-495 SUB AAA

Housing champion program

Sponsored by Rep. Speakman & Sen. Gu

✓ Authorizes the establishment of a Rhode Island housing champion designation program and makes qualified municipalities eligible to receive preferential access to state resources, including discretionary state infrastructure funds, as available.

H-5921 | S-709

Housing maintenance and occupancy code

Sponsored by Rep. Cruz & Sen. Mack

✗ Would have allowed for a tenant to withhold payment of rent, and deposit the rent accruing into an escrow bearing account, upon the issuance of a second notice of violation by an enforcing officer for any state or local minimum housing code enforcement agency.

S-940 SUB A

Historic Tax Credit program amendment

Sponsored by Sen. Bissaillon

✓ Amends sections of law relative to historic tax credits including increasing the maximum project credit and implementing requirements relative to following prevailing wage requirements.

H-6067 SUB A | S-611 SUB A

Vacant school repurposing

Sponsored by Rep. Noret & Sen. Bissaillon

✓ Clarifies roles and regulatory authority for the administration of the program involving the repurposing of vacant schools for housing, extends the deadline for conducting feasibility studies and expands access to all municipalities.

H-5100 SUB A | S-501

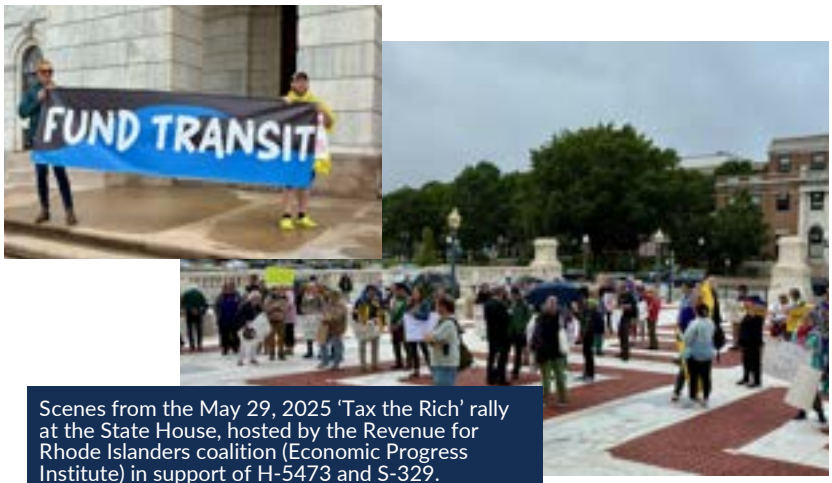
SAVE Units

Sponsored by Speaker Shekarchi & Sen. Bissaillon

✗ Would have authorized municipalities to make an emergency declaration under limited circumstances to allow for the construction and use of SAVE Units on a temporary basis which have specialized requirements and exemptions from the state fire and building codes.

Coalition-Based Legislative Priorities

The Housing Network and Homes RI are proud to participate in several coalitions that uplift issues such as civic engagement, economic mobility and public transit. These issues align with our vision that all Rhode Islanders live in thriving communities, and our goals to increase community engagement and to elevate the voices of Rhode Islanders who are most impacted by the high cost of housing in the state.



Scenes from the May 29, 2025 'Tax the Rich' rally at the State House, hosted by the Revenue for Rhode Islanders coalition (Economic Progress Institute) in support of H-5473 and S-329.

HJR-5515 | SJR-820

Same-day voter registration

Sponsored by Rep. Alzate & Sen. DiMario

✗ Would have put a constitutional amendment before voters to allow for same-day voter registration; eliminating the 30-day requirement, which is the most significant barrier to voter participation in Rhode Island.

H-5473 | S-329

3% surtax for the top 1%

Sponsored by Rep. Alzate & Sen. Murray

✗ Would have created a surtax of 3% on the top 1% of taxable incomes over $625,000. Would have prioritized the well-being of more than one million Rhode Islanders over the continued benefit of Rhode Island's 1% - several thousand tax filers - generating $190 million in annual revenue.

HJR-6020 | SJR-342

Public transportation funding

Sponsored by Rep. Alzate & Sen. McKenney

✗ Would have helped protect and invest in our public transit infrastructure by approving a $32.6 million budget allocation to close RIPTA's FY26 operating deficit to prevent mass layoffs and service cuts.

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