



February 10, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

Re: In Support of H-7127, Article 6, Question 2

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

I am writing today **in support of Article 6, Question 2** in the Governor's proposed budget. This question proposes \$120 million to increase and preserve the availability of affordable and accessible housing, with at least \$25 million allocated towards homeownership. **I strongly urge the Committee to recommend increasing the proposed bond item to \$150 million** to support affordable rental housing production and preservation specifically for low- and moderate-income households, including dedicated funds to build permanent supportive housing units for extremely low-income residents exiting homelessness.

The Housing Network of Rhode Island is an alliance of organizations including housing developers, service providers, advocacy organizations, and more who share the vision that all Rhode Islanders live in safe, healthy, and affordable homes and thriving communities. Our network of nonprofit developers has developed more than 8,000 long-term affordable homes in 27 communities across Rhode Island. The 2006, 2012, 2016, 2021 and most recently 2024 housing bonds have been significant financial resources to enabling these homes to be developed.

Housing is the single best investment that we can make as a State and in our communities to strengthen our wellbeing and economy. Housing is foundational infrastructure. It underpins our ability to reduce homelessness, improve health outcomes, support educational success, connect people to jobs, and build a workforce ready to thrive. If we fail at housing, we fail across all of these systems.

Overall, thirty-three percent (33%) of all Rhode Island households (143,023) are considered housing cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing. Among homeowner households, twenty-six percent (26%) are cost burdened and among renter households, forty-eight percent (48%) are cost burdened. Thirty-two percent (32%) of renters, or 51,596 renter households are considered extremely low income (for a household of three people, this equates to approximate yearly earnings of \$30,000 or less). It is crucial that if approved by the General Assembly, the housing bond funds be explicitly approved to produce and preserve affordable homes for low and moderate income households - up to 80% AMI for rental, and up to 120% AMI for homeownership units (following the State's definition of LMI housing in §42-128-8.1) and those investments be preserved through long term

deed restrictions to ensure that this previous stock remains available for future generations of Rhode Islanders.

On behalf of the Housing Network and the organizations in our alliance, I commend the General Assembly and the Administration for their efforts to address our housing and homelessness crisis over the past five years with the allocation resources at historic levels. The opportunity before you will sustain the momentum we've been able to gain thus far and helps ensure the prosperity and financial security of all Rhode Islanders.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the Committee to support this budget article and question (Article 6, Question 2) and recommend **increasing the proposed amount to \$150 million to produce and preserve affordable homes for low and moderate income Rhode Islanders.**

I'm happy to answer any questions the Committee might have, please feel free to contact me 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