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Contact: Nicole Dotzenrod, Communications Manager, ndotzenrod@housingnetworkri.org

Housing Network of Rhode Island Highlights 2026 Policy Priorities

PROVIDENCE – The Housing Network of Rhode Island today announced their 2026 legislative priorities, calling for bold investments and policy reforms to increase and protect Rhode Island’s supply of safe, healthy, and affordable homes.

As a network of affordable housing developers, service providers, and advocates, our legislative agenda focuses on expanding resources and tools for housing development, promoting housing stability for all Rhode Islanders and strengthening local communities. .

Key proposals include:

- **Advancing a General Obligation Bond request of at least \$150 million** to finance the production and preservation of deeply affordable rental homes, permanent supportive housing for Rhode Islanders experiencing homelessness, and homeownership opportunities for low and moderate income buyers.
- **A state-funded rental subsidy program capitalized with \$25 million** to help protect existing permanent housing interventions and provide stability to Rhode Islanders experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.
- **Expanding and codifying by-right zoning for duplexes, triplexes, and other small multifamily homes** in priority areas to encourage greater supply, affordability, and smart growth.
- **Condominium law reforms** to improve predictability and governance accountability, creating more stability for residents and associations.
- Support for a suite of complementary policies that will strengthen communities, including:
 - **Housing stability and tenant protections**, such as right-to-counsel and just-cause eviction, that help prevent displacement and homelessness.
 - **Fair tax and revenue policy** to help sustainably fund unmet needs in Rhode Island.
 - **Public transit investments and safe streets legislation** to help Rhode Islanders better connect to jobs, services, and housing, improving mobility and quality of life.
 - **Voter protections** that safeguard Rhode Islanders’ ability to participate fully in civic life.

“As Rhode Island’s housing crisis continues and federal resources wane, our state must continue to prioritize the creation and preservation of affordable homes and programs that promote housing stability,” said Melina Lodge, Executive Director of the Housing Network of Rhode Island. “Our 2026 legislative priorities reflect our shared commitment to meet this moment and ensure that R.I. is a place where all residents—regardless of income—can access a stable, affordable home in a thriving community.”

“We are making tremendous progress in addressing Rhode Island’s housing crisis: building permits are up, we’ve implemented dozens of new housing laws, and other states are watching what’s happening in the Ocean State to follow our lead. However, progress is not enough. Just recently, one of our unhoused neighbors froze to death outside in the frigid weather. This is totally unacceptable, and until there are enough homes that all Rhode Islanders can afford, our work will continue – and that is why the work the Housing Network and its partners do every day is so critical,” said House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi.

“Few policy areas are as important to our state’s future as ensuring that stable, secure housing is available to – and affordable for – every Rhode Islander. Reaching that goal will require us to act with urgency, embrace the spirit of collaboration and innovation, and seize the opportunities we have to reimagine our communities,” said Senator Jacob Bissaillon. “As Chairman of the Senate’s Committee on Housing & Municipal Government, and on behalf of President Lawson and my Senate colleagues, I am grateful for the partnership of the Housing Network of Rhode Island, and I look forward to our work together in the 2026 session.”

“These important financial investments will provide affordable housing developers and community development organizations across the state with the resources we need to further our mission of producing and preserving affordable homes,” said Sharon Morris, Executive Director of Omni Development Corporation. “We look forward to continued partnership with state leaders as they address the housing crisis in our state.”

“Every day, we’re seeing older adults and adults with severe disabilities who are pushed into homelessness at alarming rates, with nearly one in five people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. now age 55 or older,” said Jessica Mowry, Executive Director of WARM Center. “This crisis is accelerating, and without bold, immediate action, thousands more people, including seniors and people with disabilities, will be left without the safe, stable housing they need to survive.”

The Housing Network of Rhode Island, our members and our partners remain committed to working alongside our elected leaders at all levels of government to ensure that every Rhode Islander has a safe, healthy, and affordable home.

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The Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI) works to increase and preserve the supply of high-quality affordable homes across Rhode Island through coalition building, increasing public support, and policy advocacy. Our vision is that all Rhode Islanders live in safe, healthy, and affordable homes in thriving communities.