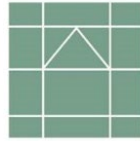


H O U S I N G



N E T W O R K

March 18, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House, 82 Smith Street, Providence RI 02903

Re: In Opposition of House Bills 7559, 7560, 8066, and 8112

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island, I write today to respectfully oppose House bills 7559, 7560, 8066, and 8112. The mission of the Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI) is to increase the supply of high-quality affordable homes in thriving communities through coalition building, public awareness, and policy advocacy. Our statewide alliance includes 19 affordable housing developers who own and operate more than 7,500 long-term rental and homeownership units for low- and moderate-income households, as well as organizations providing support and services to the more than 2,000 unhoused Rhode Islanders.

The statewide rental registry was created as a system check to help enforce compliance of existing lead hazard mitigation laws. As the implementation has proceeded, evidence suggests that this goal is being achieved and the registry is functioning as intended. In addition to its primary purpose as a tool to make rental housing safer, it also helps foster public transparency, consumer protection, and creates a source of data to better understand our state's rental home inventory. H-7559 and H-7560 both would weaken the rental registry by limiting the number of properties that must be registered and limiting public access to the registry. While we appreciate that property owners have concerns about certain aspects of the registry, it is our position that the interests of protecting vulnerable children and families, public transparency, and understanding our rental housing stock should take precedence, as was intended when the registry was enacted.

H-8066 follows a national trend of real estate interests that are pushing state legislatures to adopt new measures that criminalize squatting and facilitate immediate police intervention. Rhode Island, like every other state, already criminalizes trespassing and has established procedures for removing people from a property who have no legal right to be there. We are concerned that not only is this legislation unnecessary given the existing remedies property owners have to address trespassing and squatting, but it has the potential to be applied inappropriately to lawful occupants, allowing landlords to bypass legal court-based eviction proceedings, as well as increase discrimination against our unhoused neighbors. More background about the harmful consequences of similar legislation can be found in this [memo](#) published by the National Housing Law Project in 2024.

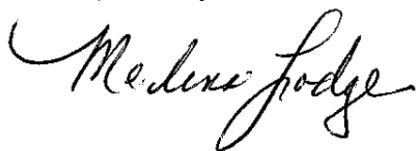
We can appreciate that the intent of H-8112 may be to offer flexibility to both landlords and tenants in terms of accepting pre-paid rent. However, we are not aware of any legislation that precludes this arrangement from occurring already. A tenant may make an offer to pre-pay their

rent and a landlord may or may not accept. This bill would not just enable flexibility. It offers a statutory pathway for landlords to require up to four months' rent upfront. Given the costs of housing (exceeding \$2,000 for the average 2-bedroom in the Providence metro area) and the difficulty that renters across all income spectra are experiencing in obtaining housing, we do not believe this is reasonable, and will further hamper the ability of hardworking Rhode Islanders, older adults, families, and people with disabilities to secure a place to live.

We are aware of and appreciate the concerns that many property owners have about the risks that come with providing rental housing, including the potential for damage to units. We believe that there are more appropriate policy tools, such as landlord mitigation funds and home repair resources, that can be deployed to support property owners in managing the risks inherent to rental property ownership and management, specifically to address repairs needed when a tenant vacates, that would not add additional burdens for Rhode Islanders seeking housing.

For the reasons above, we respectfully urge the Committee to oppose these bills. The General Assembly has made significant strides to advance housing affordability and accessibility in Rhode Island under both House and Senate leadership. We applaud the efforts of State leaders to move in this direction, and it is our position that these bills are not in alignment to our state's housing goals. Thank you for your consideration, and I can be reached at (401) 721-5680 ext. 104 or mlodge@housingnetworkri.org for any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melina Lodge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melina Lodge, Executive Director