



March 18, 2026

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

**Re: In Support of House Bills 7762, 7764, 7765, 7766, 8109, 8111, 8141, and 8274**

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of HNRI, I write in support of several bills before this committee pertaining to landlord-tenant law and Rhode Island's Fair Housing Practices Act, House bills 7762, 7764, 7765, 7766, 8109, 8141, and 8274. The Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI) is a statewide alliance of members and partners serving low-income Rhode Islanders, who share the vision that all Rhode Islanders live in safe, healthy, affordable homes in thriving communities. Our alliance includes 19 nonprofit housing developers who own and operate more than 7,500 rental homes for low- and moderate-income Rhode Islanders, as well as organizations who provide support and other services to the more than 2,500 Rhode Islanders who are experiencing homelessness.

Our state's housing needs are well-documented. This winter, we have experienced multiple events of extreme, life-threatening cold weather and two severe snowstorms while homelessness is at an all-time high, with at least four deaths attributed to cold exposure. 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.

At the beginning of the month, the National Low Income Housing Coalition released a report showing that Rhode Island has a shortage of more than 23,222 rental homes that are affordable and available to the lowest income renters. In analyzing eviction judgment numbers available from RIHousing and the RI Supreme Court, there were an average of 4,078 evictions per year, over the past five years (total number of judgments for 2019 – 2025 is 20,391). Many of these households are likely to have entered the homelessness system. When people lose their housing stability, there is a significant cost – not just to that individual's personal finances, safety, and wellbeing, but to cities and towns, our state, and systems of care that are not properly resourced, nor designed, to address homelessness long-term. In addition to investments in programs such as long-term rental subsidies and the production of more affordable housing, the solution to homelessness and chronic housing instability lies in adopting policies that support stable tenancies and expanding access to housing. The legislation we have expressed our support for will achieve that.

With respect to H-8109, 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 are no conflicts between the provisions of the chapter and any requirements prescribed by federal regulations or federal, state or local financial authorities as a condition of providing either restricted rents or occupant income restrictions. Similarly, we would recommend this clarification also be applied to 34-18-38.3 (b)(1)(i) as it relates to rent increases, for properties that are subject to restrictions on rent and tenant income restrictions pursuant to local, state, or federal housing programs. 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.

We applaud 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 and reduce homelessness.

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](mailto:mlodge@housingnetworkri.org).

Respectfully,

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

Melina Lodge, Executive Director