



April 16, 2026

The Honorable Jacob Bissailon
Chair, Senate Committee on Housing and Municipal Government
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence RI 02903

RE: Support with comments for S2473

Dear Chairman Bissailon and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI) and our alliance of members, partners, and low-income Rhode Islanders we seek to serve, I write to offer our support (with comments) for **S2473**, legislation intended to provide greater accessibility and visitability for people with physical disabilities in new residential construction.

We recognize and appreciate the intent of Senator Bell's bill to establish new building standards that advance accessible and inclusive design in residential construction. According to HousingWorks' 2025 Fact Book, approximately 25% of Rhode Islanders live with some form of ambulatory disability. This underscores a clear and growing need for housing that is designed from the outset to be usable by people of all ages and abilities.

Ensuring that Rhode Islanders with physical disabilities and older adults with mobility challenges can access homes that support not only their physical needs, but also their independence, dignity, and social wellbeing, is essential to building truly inclusive and thriving communities. Incorporating accessible design as a standard feature of new residential development—rather than an afterthought—represents a practical and forward-looking approach to meeting this need.

We also recognize that mobility challenges affect Rhode Islanders across all income levels, and we appreciate **S2473**'s effort to broaden the reach of accessibility beyond income-restricted housing. Expanding access to universally designed homes helps create more flexible housing options, supports aging in place, and strengthens community cohesion.

We are continuing to work with the bill sponsor on amendments to further refine the scope and ensure the provisions are clear, implementable, and effective in advancing accessible design without creating unintended barriers to development.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our support of **S2473**. I am available to answer any questions members of the Committee may have and can be reached at 401-721-5680 ext. 104 or mlodge@housingnetworkri.org.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Melina Lodge, MCP
Executive Director