



April 29, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House,
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H8208 Support

Dear Chair Abney and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **H8208**. I am writing on behalf of our agency, the proposed recipient of the funding outlined in this legislation, to emphasize both the urgency of this moment and the critical importance of investing in collaboration, capacity building, and organizational resilience across Rhode Island's housing development and homelessness response system.

Rhode Island is at an inflection point. The pressures on our housing and homelessness systems have intensified in recent years due to rising housing costs, limited supply, workforce constraints, and the lasting impacts of the pandemic. Providers across the continuum—from emergency shelter to permanent housing development—are being asked to do more with fewer resources, often operating at or beyond capacity. Without targeted investment, the system risks fragmentation, burnout, and missed opportunities to deliver coordinated, effective solutions.

H8208 recognizes that the challenge before us is not just one of scale, but of system strength. This is precisely the right time to invest in the underlying infrastructure that allows organizations to work together effectively, adapt to changing conditions, and deliver results at a higher level.

If awarded, this funding would allow our agency to focus on three interconnected priorities:

First, strengthening collaboration. Addressing housing instability and homelessness requires coordinated action across developers, service providers, municipalities, and state partners. We would expand shared planning efforts, improve data integration, and support cross-sector partnerships that reduce duplication and ensure that resources are deployed where they are most needed.

Second, building capacity. Many organizations in this space—particularly smaller and community-based providers—lack the staffing and the technical expertise and tools, to fully participate in all aspects of the housing and homelessness landscape. This funding would support strategic communications, technical assistance, peer learning and workforce development, and operational improvements that enable these organizations to grow and contribute more effectively.

Third, enhancing organizational resilience. The current environment is placing extraordinary strain on providers, with high staff turnover, funding volatility, and increasing complexity in project financing and service delivery. Investing in resilience—through stronger financial systems, staffing pipeline and leadership development, and sustainable operational models—ensures that organizations can remain stable and responsive over the long term.

The timing of this investment is critical. Significant federal and state housing resources are currently flowing into Rhode Island, creating a rare window of opportunity to accelerate housing production and system improvements. However, without parallel investment in the capacity and coordination of the organizations responsible for deploying these resources, we risk leaving impact on the table. H8208 ensures that we are not only funding projects, but also strengthening the system that delivers them.

Our agency is committed to stewarding these funds responsibly, with clear metrics, transparent reporting, and a focus on measurable outcomes. We will work collaboratively with partners across the state to ensure that this investment leads to tangible improvements in housing stability, system efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

In closing, **H8208** is a forward-looking investment in the people and organizations working every day to address Rhode Island's housing and homelessness challenges. By prioritizing collaboration, capacity, and resilience, this legislation positions our state to make lasting progress at a time when it is both urgently needed and uniquely possible.

We are grateful for your consideration and respectfully urge the Committee to support the passage of **H8208**. 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 submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Melina Lodge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Melina" being more prominent than the last name "Lodge".

Melina Lodge, Executive Director