



October 19, 2021

Honorable Governor Dan J. McKee
Honorable Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero
Honorable House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Governor McKee, President Ruggiero and Speaker Shekarchi:

We appreciate Governor McKee's recent proposal to begin using American Rescue Plan Act funds to invest in affordable homes, child care, small businesses, and expanding broadband access. We wholeheartedly agree that investing in these inter-connected sectors now is critical to Rhode Islanders' economic recovery, and are pleased to see \$29 million allocated for housing affordability and security. With that said, we have serious concerns that this proposed allocation falls far short of the level of investment needed for immediate and long-term housing needs. We are reaching out to you, our Executive and Legislative leaders, to respectfully request the following:

- An immediate authorization of an additional \$25 million to address emergency needs for hundreds of people who are sleeping in outdoor encampments and cars, before winter begins in December.
- An investment of \$500 million to produce, preserve, and protect 2,500 affordable homes by 2030 (\$350 million), promote housing access and stability (\$60 million), and support communities to address issues associated with aging housing stock (\$90 million), to advance longer-term housing needs. The enclosed recommendations outline this request in further detail and were developed through a collaborative process with input from multiple stakeholders.

We ask that the Executive Administration and Legislature move aggressively to obligate these funds within the next six to twelve months, well ahead of the December 31, 2024 deadline set by the Treasury. Rhode Island is one of very few states that have not yet formally allocated ARPA State Fiscal Recovery funds.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated housing insecurity, especially for low-income families and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. According to the RI Coalition to End

Homes RI is a coalition of organizations working together to increase and preserve the supply of safe, healthy and affordable homes throughout Rhode Island.

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Homelessness, over the past month, nearly 600 people were sleeping outdoors or in places not fit for human habitation. Our rental vacancy rate is the lowest it has been in a long time, around two percent. Our lowest-paid workers - many of whom are in fast-growing occupations such as food service, housekeeping, and personal care - must work at least 80 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, to afford an apartment at fair market price, an unsustainable and unrealistic situation. The sooner funds for housing are deployed, the sooner these conditions Rhode Islanders are experiencing can be addressed.

We understand that the Administration and General Assembly must consider recommendations for longer-term solutions and balance multiple connected priorities. We urge you to seriously consider the impact of generational and timely investments in safe, healthy, affordable homes for Rhode Islanders.

Thank you Governor, Speaker Shekarchi and President Ruggerio for prioritizing housing in your agenda and we appreciate your leadership. We are ready and committed to working with you, your staff and colleagues to implement the most effective solutions for Rhode Islanders as we confront both entrenched systemic issues and the effects of a global pandemic.

Respectfully,

Amos House	Barbara Sokoloff Associates
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of RI	The Center for Health and Justice Transformation
Childhood Lead Action Project	Church Community Housing Corporation
Community Care Alliance	Community Housing Land Trust of RI
Councilwoman Nirva LaFortune	Crossroads Rhode Island
Direct Action for Rights & Equality (DARE)	Dunamis Synergy at WEHCD
Economic Progress Institute	Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center
Feinstein Institute for Public Service at PC	George Wiley Center
Habitat for Humanity of RI – Greater Providence	
House of Hope CDC	Housing Network of Rhode Island
HOPE at Brown University	HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University
Jonnycake Center for Hope	Lucy's Hearth
McAuley Ministries	McKinney Cooperative Shelter
Neighbors Helping Neighbors RI	NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley
Newport Partnership for Families	Newport Working Cities Collaborative
Ocean State Center for Independent Living	Omni Development Corporation
ONE Neighborhood Builders	Pawtucket Central Falls Development
Pawtucket Housing Authority	Pawtucket Housing, Inc.
Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH)	Project Weber/RENEW

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition RI	Providence Preservation Society
RI Center for Justice	RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence
RI Coalition to End Homelessness	RI Community Action Association
RI Developmental Disabilities Council	RI Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty
RI KIDS COUNT	Right from the Start Campaign
Smith Hill CDC	Sojourner House
South County Habitat for Humanity	United Way of Rhode Island
Washington County CDC	Westbay Community Action
West Broadway Neighborhood Assoc.	West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation
Women's Development Corporation	Women's Resource Center

CC: Honorable Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos
 Honorable Senator Ryan Pearson, Senate Finance Chair
 Honorable Representative Marvin Abney, House Finance Chair
 Honorable Representative Alex D. Marszalkowski, ARPA Task Force Co-Chair
 Honorable Representative Carlos Tobón, ARPA Task Force Co-Chair
 Honorable Secretary of Commerce Stefan Pryor
 Kimberly Ahern, Senior Counsel and Director of Policy, Office of Gov. McKee
 Lynne Urbani, Director of Policy, Rhode Island House of Representatives
 Nora Crowley, Policy Director, Rhode Island Senate

Encl: *Housing Stability for Rhode Islanders: Recommendations for State ARPA Funds*
 Homes RI, Sept. 2021