



January 12, 2024

Honorable Governor Dan J. McKee
State of Rhode Island

Sent via email

Dear Governor McKee:

We write to express our appreciation for the combined efforts of the Executive Administration and the Rhode Island General Assembly during the last two fiscal cycles to allocate significant resources from the American Rescue Plan Act State Fiscal Recovery funds towards the development of affordable homes and programs for Rhode Islanders experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We were pleased that State leadership capitalized on the infusion of these one-time federal relief funds to advance the State's housing and homelessness goals. Additionally, we appreciate your recognition that Rhode Island lacked a critical housing finance tool held by our neighboring states and applaud the successful establishment of Rhode Island's first State Low Income Housing Tax Credit. Robust housing production and universal housing stability are foundational to the long-term economic success of our state.

As a result of the actions of State leadership, *more* good paying jobs have been created in the construction and social services sectors, *more* long-term affordable homes for Rhode Islanders have been built or preserved, *more* first time homebuyers have had access to financial resources needed to achieve the dream of homeownership, and *more* individuals and families were able to avoid eviction and homelessness through expanded access to legal counsel and other supports.

For too many decades, Rhode Island has failed to make the essential investments and policy changes needed to appropriately recognize and meet the need for housing development and stability. Those inactions set the stage for the urgent and persistent housing crisis that leaders grapple with today, with more than one-third of Rhode Islanders experiencing housing cost burden, and a 370% increase in unsheltered homelessness over the past four years. Thanks to the leadership demonstrated by current decision-makers, we are making progress and have gained momentum. We must sustain it.

To help ensure that we do, we respectfully request the inclusion of the following transformational investments as part of your FY25 budget proposal:

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

1070 Main Street, Pawtucket, RI 02860 / 401-721-5680 / www.homesri.org

- A General Obligation Bond of at least \$250 million to fund capital costs of construction and preservation of long-term affordable homes for low-income and moderate Rhode Islanders;
- At least \$12 million to establish an Emergency Rental Assistance program for Rhode Islanders with short-term financial crises;
- At least \$1.6 million to continue legal assistance to tenants to aid in the prevention of homelessness as currently proposed by the Department of Housing;
- At least \$21 million for down-payment assistance to support first-time and first-generation buyers in achieving their aspirations to own a home;
- At least \$10 million for home repair programming to ensure the long-term viability of our existing housing stock, as proposed by the Department of Housing; and,
- Fully funding the implementation of a statewide mandatory rental registry as required by RI General Law § 34-18-58.

Rhode Islanders across almost all income brackets are struggling with the compounding effects of the rising costs of living and the lack of adequate housing supply. The positive impacts of previous historic investments made are at risk of being undermined without an appropriate continued investment. As federal relief funds approach full obligation and nearing expenditure deadlines, it's imperative that State leaders take action to maintain this level of investment. Maintaining the pace of recent development and increasing housing stability for Rhode Islanders depends on it.

We welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss why the requested amounts and scopes are not only appropriate, but necessary. We are ready to work with you and help secure these resources in the General Assembly, and then with voters. Working together, we can transform our state into a place where all Rhode Islanders thrive.

Respectfully,

Organizations

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| Alliance to Mobilize Our Resistance – AMOR | Amnesty International, Local Group 1016 |
| Amos House | Barbara Sokoloff Associates |
| Brown Initiative for Policy Affordable Housing Team | |
| Church Community Housing Corporation | Community Housing Land Trust of RI |
| Comprehensive Community Action Program | Crossroads RI |
| Foster Forward | |
| Habitat for Humanity of Greater Providence and East Bay | |
| Haus of Codec | House of Hope CDC |
| Housing Network of Rhode Island | Housing Opportunities Corporation |

HousingWorks RI at RWU
LISC RI
NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley
ONE Neighborhood Builders
POAH
Project Weber/RENEW
Providence Revolving Fund
RAMP – Real Access Motivates Progress
RI Center for Justice
RI Coalition to End Homelessness
RI Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty
Sojourner House
SWAP, Inc.
Valley Affordable Housing Corporation
Women’s Development Corporation

Jonnycake Center for Hope
MLPB
Ocean State Center for Independent Living
Pawtucket Housing Authority
Progreso Latino
Protect Our Healthcare Coalition
Providence Urbanist Network
Reclaim RI
RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence
RI Homeless Advocacy Project
RI KIDS COUNT
South County Habitat for Humanity
United Way of Rhode Island
WBNA, Inc.
Youth Pride, Inc.

Individuals

Liza Burkin, Providence
Becki Marcus, Providence
Vincent Marzullo, West Warwick
Charlie Thomas-Davison, Warwick

Tory Flis, Middletown
George E. Marley, Cranston
Jim Ryczek, Barrington
Terri Wright, Providence

CC:

Secretary of Housing Stefan Pryor
Honorable Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero
Honorable House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi
Honorable Senator Lou DiPalma, Senate Finance Chair
Honorable Representative Marvin Abney, House Finance Chair
Kate Pirraglia, Senior Advisor and Special Counsel, Office of Governor McKee
Lynne Urbani, Director of Policy, Rhode Island House of Representatives
Joseph Masino, Director of Policy, Rhode Island Senate