

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Homes RI Coalition Highlights FY25 Legislative Priorities

Homes RI coalition champions policies aimed at addressing the critical need for safe, healthy, and affordable homes throughout Rhode Island

Providence, RI – The **Homes RI** coalition highlighted its 2024 legislative priorities aimed at addressing the critical need for safe, healthy, and affordable homes throughout Rhode Island today during an event at the State House Library.

Joining the Homes RI coalition to advocate for comprehensive housing policies and investments were legislative leadership including House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi, Senate Majority Whip Valarie J. Lawson, Senator Tiara Mack, Representative Cherie L. Cruz, the Housing Network of Rhode Island, and other housing advocates.

*“The severe lack of affordable housing in our state is a crisis that requires immediate and sustained action, said **Melina Lodge, Executive Director of the Housing Network of Rhode Island**. “By authorizing a \$150 million General Obligation Bond to fund the construction and preservation of affordable homes, reforming zoning and land use policies, and enacting measures to reduce evictions and increase housing stability, we can make an immediate difference in the lives of Rhode Islanders. I urge our legislators to recognize the urgency of this issue and to support these vital measures. Together, we can build a Rhode Island where everyone has the opportunity to thrive in a safe and affordable home.”*

*“Over the past several years, the General Assembly has made historic progress and historic investments in affordable housing and addressing homelessness, but we are not letting up now. Anyone who has tried to rent or purchase a home in Rhode Island recently has probably struggled, regardless of their price point. Rhode Island’s housing supply is still dangerously lagging, and it’s our neighbors with lower incomes who are disproportionately impacted,” said **Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi**. “I thank the Homes RI coalition members for their advocacy and partnership in tackling Rhode Island’s housing and homelessness crisis. We are making real progress in reducing barriers to development, and we will continue until all Rhode Islanders have the homes they need.”*

Senate Majority Whip Valarie Lawson said, *“We continue to face a housing emergency across our state, impacting every community and all walks of life. It disrupts lives, holds back our economy, and exacerbates long-standing inequality. We must continue to work together to ensure housing is safe, affordable, and accessible for everyone who calls our state home.”*

*“When we talk about good housing policy, we must remember that the rental registry is critically important for keeping our kids safe and giving parents peace of mind in knowing they are safe,” said **Attorney General Peter F. Neronha**. “The registry is designed to hold landlords accountable by ensuring Rhode Island’s rental housing stock is lead-safe. And as the housing crisis continues to impact tenants across Rhode Island, families can’t afford to be picky.*

Therefore, it is absolutely essential that the registry is properly implemented, arming renters with the information they need to make important housing decisions while requiring compliance and transparency from landlords. And we won't back down until it's in place."

FY25 Budget Priorities

Invest to Build and Preserve Affordable Homes, Reduce Homelessness, & Promote Healthy Homes

- Authorize a General Obligation Bond: The Homes RI coalition supports a bond of at least \$150 million to fund the construction and preservation of long-term affordable homes for low- and moderate-income residents.
- Ensure adequate increased funding to address urgent needs of unsheltered Rhode Islanders while preserving the State's Housing Production Fund, one of the only dedicated sources of state funding for creating and operating permanent low-income housing.
- Rental Registry: Implement a comprehensive rental registry as mandated by the General Assembly in 2023 to ensure quality and safety in rental housing and to help prevent child lead poisoning.

Stabilize Residents and Prevent Displacement

- Reduce Evictions and Increase Housing Stability: The coalition supports legislative measures to protect low-income renters, including fair notice requirements for rent increases and lease terminations (S-2189 and H-7304), just-cause eviction protections (S-2920 and H-7960), and the right to counsel in eviction proceedings (S-2923 and H-7957).
- Community Opportunity to Purchase Act: This Act enables qualified nonprofits to have a right-of-first refusal on existing multi-family properties to maintain and develop them as long-term affordable homes (S-2631 and H-7655).

Reform Zoning and Land Use Policies

- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs): The coalition supports legislation that allows the construction of ADUs across Rhode Island to increase housing supply (S-2998 and H-7062).
- Streamline Residential Housing Production: The coalition supports simplifying and expediting the production of residential housing in communities throughout the state.

*"As a mother of two and someone who has faced homelessness and domestic violence, I understand firsthand the critical need for affordable housing," said **Michela "Kayla" Serrano**, Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness, Voices of Homelessness/Constituents Advisory Committee member. "Stable, affordable housing is the foundation for recovery and*

rebuilding lives. It's not just about having a roof over your head; it's about providing a safe and supportive environment where individuals and families can thrive."

*"Increasing the proposed housing bond to at least \$150 million would be a crucial step toward addressing Rhode Island's affordable housing crisis," said **Frank Shea, Executive Director of the Women's Development Corporation**. "This additional funding is essential for both the production of new affordable housing and the preservation of our existing housing stock. Projects like our 40-unit Pine View Project in Exeter, which leveraged Federal 4% Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, demonstrate how state investments can maximize federal resources and achieve significant community goals. Increasing the bond will ensure we do not leave valuable federal funds on the table and can continue to support low- and moderate-income households across the state."*

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Homes RI is a multi-sector coalition dedicated to increasing and preserving the supply of affordable homes in Rhode Island. We envision a state where every resident can live in a safe, healthy, and affordable home within a thriving community. Achieving this vision requires significant investments and innovative policy changes to produce, protect, and preserve affordable homes, and to remove barriers to accessing quality housing.