

2024

LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP



HOMES RI

INVESTING IN RHODE ISLAND'S FUTURE: PRODUCE, PROTECT & PRESERVE AFFORDABLE HOMES

To ensure that all Rhode Islanders live in safe, healthy, affordable homes in thriving communities, our state must commit to making transformational investments and policy changes. As a multi-sector housing advocacy coalition working together to increase and preserve the supply of safe, healthy, and affordable homes, we are pleased that Rhode Island state leaders continue to recognize housing as a top priority.

This legislative session, Homes RI was proud to support policies that remove legal, administrative, regulatory, and economic barriers to accessing quality homes. Investing in programs and implementing policies that prevent eviction and homelessness, protect existing housing stock, and expand homeownership strengthens our communities.

Homes RI was pleased to support the proposal for a historic housing bond this session. We advocated together for additional bond funding, and are grateful that House and Senate Leadership agreed to increase the proposed bond amount from \$100 to \$120 million.

House Speaker **K. Joseph Shekarchi** makes remarks during Homes RI's May 2024 Advocacy & Press Event at the State House.



Members of the Homes RI coalition and Save RIPTA Coalition held a joint advocacy day at the State House in April 2024.

Critical housing, transit, and climate related investments in the state's FY25 budget, along with state and local policy changes that advance community development, will help us make progress today, and create powerful returns well into tomorrow.

We are grateful to all of our partners, supporters, legislative champions, and coalition comrades who are dedicated to fostering an equitable, economically secure future for all Rhode Islanders.

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BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

FY25 RHODE ISLAND HOUSING PROVISIONS



\$120 Million Housing Bond



Leadership and House Finance agreed to increase the amount of Rhode Island's proposed housing bond from \$100 million to \$120 million. The budget allocates the funding as follows:

- **\$80 million to increase and preserve the availability of low and moderate income housing.** Of that amount, \$10 million may be set aside to support a new program for **public housing development**,
- **\$20 million to increase production of homes for sale** for low, moderate, and middle income households,
- **\$10 million for acquisition and revitalization**, a program that incentivizes developers to purchase and redevelop foreclosed and/or blighted properties for housing, commercial use, or community space,
- **\$5 million to support acquisition of properties** for redevelopment as affordable or supportive housing,
- **\$4 million to support site-related infrastructure** needed for affordable housing production,
- **\$1 million to support municipalities** with planning and implementing land use and zoning changes that enable additional housing development.



Rental Registry

The budget preserves the mandatory statewide rental registry as it was passed by lawmakers in 2023. The changes proposed in the Governor's FY 25 budget would have significantly diluted the effectiveness of the registry. The Dept. of Health received requested funding of \$1.3 million to implement the registry.



Housing Stability

The Governor requested an amendment to create a permanent funding source for housing stability and homelessness (the Housing Resources and Homelessness restricted receipt account). The amendment would have applied a 5% hotel tax to whole-home short-term rentals. **The whole-home tax was not approved in the budget. Instead, the budget adds \$10 million from FY24 general revenues to recapitalize the account.**

The fund may be used to provide for initiatives including housing production, lead hazard abatement, housing rental subsidy, housing retention assistance, and homelessness services and prevention assistance with priority to veterans.



Homelessness Provisions

The budget adds \$17.3 million in State Fiscal Recovery Funds to support the Homeless Assistance Fund. The fund is administered by the Dept. of Housing, and supports a program to expand housing navigation, behavioral health, and stabilization services to address pandemic-related homelessness. The program supports services for people transitioning from homelessness to housing, including people transitioning from incarceration. The budget removes language about operating subsidies for extremely-low and low-income housing.



Other Provisions

Grants \$500,000 in FY24 general revenues to Crossroads for homeless services and \$90,000 to RI Legal Services for housing and eviction defense (Note, these are not new appropriations, these are also through Human Services and Judiciary budgets).

Moves language establishing the secretary of housing under the Executive Office of Commerce to Section 18, which establishes the Department of Housing. There were some changes made to the language of requirements for the integrated housing report, with an updated submission date of April 15, 2025, and annually thereafter.

Authorizes 38 FTEs for the Department of Housing.



Housing Production Fund

The budget preserves the existing Housing Production Fund without expanding allowable uses. An amendment proposed to expand eligible uses of this fund to include housing problem solving, housing subsidies, and homeless prevention, and transfer administration to the Department of Housing and Housing Resources Commission Coordinating Committee from RIHousing.

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

2024 HOUSING LEGISLATION




304*
BILLS TRACKED

165 HOUSING-RELATED BILLS

24 BUDGET & BOND BILLS

115 BILLS RELATED TO ENVIRONMENT, UTILITIES, TRANSIT, ECONOMIC SECURITY, VOTER ACCESS, TAXATION/MUNICIPAL AID, & MORE

✓ **PASSED**
✗ **DID NOT PASS**

* Includes both Senate and House bills

S-2189 SUB A | H-7304 SUB A

Fair notice of rent increases

Sponsored by Sen. Mack & Rep. Stewart

NOTICE
RENT INCREASE

✓ Increases the time requirement notice for rental increases from 30 days to 60 days, and 120 days for people over the age of 62 who are not in a congregate care setting.

S-2923 | H-7957

Right-to-counsel

Sponsored by Sen. Mack & Rep. Cruz

✗ Creates the civil right to full legal representation for eligible individuals in an eviction case.



S-2643 SUB A | H-7647 SUB A

Rental fee disclosures

Sponsored by Sen. Mack & Rep. Kislak

✓ Requires landlords to disclose all rental fees that tenants are obligated to pay.

Prohibits landlords from charging convenience fees to process rental payments.



S-2920 | H-7960

Just-cause eviction

Sponsored by Sen. Mack & Rep. Cruz

✗ Provides that a landlord shall not evict a tenant without "good cause," as set forth under the law.



S-2998 SUB A | H-7062 SUB A

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

Sponsored by Sen. Gu & Rep. Speakman

✓ Enables the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) across Rhode Island.

Note: This bill is part of the Speaker's package of housing bills, continued on pages 4 & 5 of this report.



S-2919 SUB AA | H-7746

Security deposits

Sponsored by Sen. Mack & Rep. Cruz

✗ Provides that landlords would pay interest on security deposits in residential landlord-tenant matters.



S-2631 | H-7655

Community Opportunity to Purchase Act

Sponsored by Sen. Kallman & Rep. Speakman

✗ Gives qualified nonprofits a right-of-first refusal on existing multi-family properties to develop and/or preserve as long-term affordable homes.



POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

2024 HOUSING LEGISLATION, CONTINUED



14

BILLS IN HOUSE SPEAKER K. JOSEPH SHEKARCHI'S HOUSING PACKAGE

✓ **PASSED**

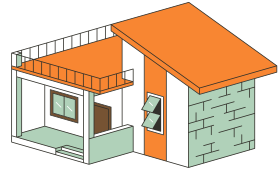
S-2989 SUB A | H-7980 SUB A as amended

Manufactured homes

Sponsored by Sen. Tikoian & Speaker Shekarchi



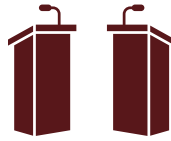
Defines manufactured homes in accordance with HUD regulations, and allows cities and towns to count them as single-family homes on lots zoned for single-family use.



S-2991 | H-7979

Zoning/planning pilot

Sponsored by Sen. Burke & Speaker Shekarchi



Enables a pilot program giving municipalities the authority to combine zoning and planning boards.

S-2990 SUB A | H-7983 SUB B

Code enforcement

Sponsored by Sen. Ciccone & Rep. Cruz



Codifies the structure of the State Building Code Office and clarifies the role of the Commissioner. Modifies language to ensure uniform code enforcement and establishes an education and training unit for building officials and inspectors.

S-3036 SUB A | H-7978 SUB A

Electronic permitting

Sponsored by Sen. Murray & Speaker Shekarchi



Enables municipalities to use electronic permitting for building permits. This streamlines processes and makes timelines and submission requirements clearer using an existing state database.



S-2992 SUB A | H-7986 SUB A as amended

Inventory of abandoned properties

Sponsored by Sen. Batista & Rep. Kallman



Requires a municipal inventory of abandoned buildings and clarifies the abatement process. For nuisance properties in receivership, judges may give priority to buyers who will designate the property as low- or moderate-income housing, owner-occupied housing, or make other commitments to keep it affordable.

HR-7977 SUB A

Educating planners

Sponsored by Speaker Shekarchi



Establishes a Special Legislative Commission to study the ability of RI's educational system to offer degrees or certificates to provide a pipeline of community planners, planning technicians, and staff.

S-3001 SUB A | H-7949 SUB A as amended

Subdivisions of land

Sponsored by Sen. LaMountain & Rep. Craven



Makes amendments to various provisions relative to subdivision of land review, review stages, special provisions related to development, and the procedures for approvals from permitting authorities.

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

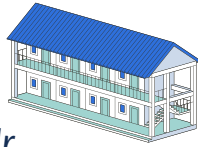
2024 HOUSING LEGISLATION, CONTINUED



S-2999 SUB A | H-7948 SUB A

Inclusionary zoning

Sponsored by Sen. Bissaillon & Rep. Solomon Jr.

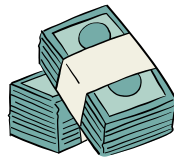


- ✓ Adds flexibility to inclusionary zoning ordinances by reducing the requirement for affordable housing from 25% to 15% of the total proposed units in a development. Clarifies density bonus determinations that add flexibility to the inclusionary requirements, to encourage additional housing development.

S-3000 SUB A | H-7950 SUB A

Financial security

Sponsored by Sen. Euer & Rep. Felix



- ✓ Requires cities/towns to allow at least three disclosed types of financial security provided by developers on projects that include public improvements.

S-2994 | H-7982

Wetland buffers

Sponsored by Sen. McKenney & Rep. Cortvriend



- ✓ Amends provisions relative to the application of zoning ordinances pertaining to wetland buffers to projects for development, redevelopment, construction or rehabilitation. It makes clear that there can be no local regulation of coastal wetlands and freshwater wetlands beyond the requirements of the state agency requirements.

S-2993 as amended | H- 7984 SUB A as amended

Mobile homes as affordable housing

Sponsored by Sen. DiPalma & Rep. Hagan McEntee



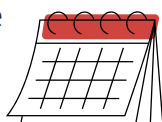
- ✓ Would allow municipalities to fully count mobile and manufactured homes as affordable housing (towards their 10% goal) if they are a primary residence, are part of a resident-owned mobile home park, and comply with HUD standards. Any mobile or manufactured home may be partially counted towards a municipality's 10% LMIH goal subject to verification by an affordable housing monitoring agent.

S-2988 SUB A | H-7951 SUB A

Limitations to permitting & development

Sponsored by Sen. Lombardi & Rep. Craven

- ✓ Would clarify the circumstances under which a municipality can limit accepting and hearing development applications and limit building permits related to the development of housing, and specifies the timeframes in which those limitations can be in place.



S-2995 SUB A | H-7985 SUB A

Report on statewide GIS

Sponsored by Sen. Mack & Rep. Spears

- ✓ Would instruct the Department of Administration to develop a report on the creation of a comprehensive and integrated statewide Geographic Information System (GIS). This report would evaluate the cost, staff, organizational changes and data security requirements needed to establish and maintain the platform.



Jan. - June '24

ADVOCACY REVIEW



90+

partners & supporters

304

bills tracked

We took a formal
position on

104

bills



56

people signed onto our letter
urging increased bond funding

We provided oral or written
testimony on



88

bills



30+

organizations signed onto our
letter in support of ADU
legislation

2

advocacy events
hosted by Homes RI

11

action alert
emails shared

233+



housing-related
news stories tracked

97+



news stories
mentioning Homes RI partners

6

press releases and open
letters by Homes RI

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tracked during the
session:



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