

February 26, 2025

To the Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Erica Sahin, and I am writing to you on behalf of Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE) **in full support of the changes to Article 5, Section 4, 7, and 10 of the FY26 Budget that allocate tax revenue from hotels and high-value real estate deals to the Housing Resources and Homelessness Fund.**

HOPE is a student group and one of the largest outreach programs in the state. Our teams directly witness the impact of the current housing crisis on our communities every day. More than ever are on the street this year, only to disappear from their usual spots and support networks with no warning after inhumane police raids. Our weekly clinics at Mathewson St. Church frequently involve discussions with people desperate to get subsidized housing after years of being on the waitlists. Each month we hear of multiple people who have died from being outside in freezing weather and inhospitable environments. Rhode Island urgently needs more funding for housing, temporary shelters such as Echo Village, reliable warming centers, and other solutions to this social and public health crisis.

Your committee has the power to direct government priorities to save lives and create safe living environments for all. The changes to the budget in Article 5, Section 4, 7, and 10 increase taxes on hotels and high value real estate transactions to redistribute wealth and resources towards homeless initiatives. Together, these measures are projected to generate over \$4.5 million in FY26 and \$8 million in FY27. As the federal government continues to conservatively slash funding and programs for housing and homelessness, and the pandemic relief programs come to an end, it is a crucial time to reevaluate state priorities. These budget measures are some of the only proposed new funding allocated to the severe and rapidly worsening housing crisis and will be essential for supporting Rhode Island communities and your constituents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Erica Sahin
Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere
Providence, RI