



March 27, 2024

The Honorable Robert E. Craven
Chairman House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith St
Providence RI, 02903

RE: Bill Number: 7948 AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- ZONING ORDINANCES

Dear Chairman Craven and Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to express our support for House Bill 7948, which proposes significant amendments to the inclusionary zoning law for affordable housing development. The RI League of Cities and Towns remains invested in addressing the housing crisis in Rhode Island, I believe this legislation is a crucial step forward in ensuring equitable access to affordable housing for all residents.

Inclusionary zoning is a valuable tool for municipalities to promote the provision of affordable units alongside market-rate developments. This legislation, incorporating feedback from the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Planning Association, seeks to refine and enhance the existing framework of inclusionary zoning without altering municipal approval requirements. Such a measure is essential for fostering sustainable and inclusive communities across our state.

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns is encouraged by the stance affirming that decisions regarding residential density should be made locally. This underscores the importance of empowering municipalities to tailor housing policies according to their unique needs and circumstances. By providing flexibility within the inclusionary zoning law, municipalities can better address housing challenges while respecting local autonomy.

Furthermore, the proposed amendments recognize the complementarity of inclusionary zoning with existing tools such as comprehensive permits. By extending the applicability of inclusionary zoning to projects falling below the threshold of comprehensive permits, this legislation enhances its attractiveness to developers and municipalities alike. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of widespread adoption of inclusionary zoning as a proactive strategy to alleviate our housing crisis.

In conclusion, House Bill 7948 represents a thoughtful and pragmatic approach to bolstering affordable housing development in Rhode Island. I urge you to lend your support to this important legislation, which has the potential to make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless individuals and families struggling to secure safe and affordable housing. Together, we can make meaningful progress towards ensuring that every Rhode Islander has access to safe, affordable housing.

On behalf of the League of Cities and Towns thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express our views.

Sincerely,

David M. Bodah
Associate Director

Cc: House Judiciary Committee
Ernie Almonte, Executive Director, RILCT