

The Village Common of Rhode Island

Aging Better Together

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr., Chair

Testimony by H. Philip West, Jr., on April 4, 2024,

in support of 24-H 7948 SubA by Rep. Joseph J. Solomon, et. al.
REFINING SECTIONS OF STATE LAW ON ZONING ORDINANCES

Thank you, Chairman Craven and members of the House Judiciary Committee for this hearing. **Please accept this written testimony on behalf of The Village Common of Rhode Island in support of 24-H 7948 SubA by Rep. Solomon, legislation that would amend several sections of RIGL 45-24-46.1 on Inclusionary Zoning to encourage development of affordable units.**

My name is H. Philip West, Jr., and I serve as a volunteer lobbyist on behalf of The Village Common of Rhode Island, a statewide non-profit that helps older adults live safely and independently in their homes. In communities across Rhode Island, our locally organized and operated villages deploy hundreds of helpful volunteers. Our volunteer-centered approach enhances lives, strengthens communities, and saves money.

The Village Common supports Rep. Solomon's legislation to apply fees-in-lieu, density bonus provisions, and other municipal subsidies to encourage the development of affordable housing. We hope density bonuses will encourage municipalities to recognize the value of creating homes within their boundaries for essential workers.

We see potential benefits in 7948 SubA for all involved. By agreeing to set aside 15% of units as affordable housing, developers will be allowed to build more total units on the same amount of land. Slightly greater density in attractive market-rate projects will translate into higher potential sales or rental income, and it will boost profits. As described in Rep. Solomon's legislation, the density bonus will create flexibility for developers and should allow them to save both time and money. We think real estate investors will also find these provisions desirable.

We hope integrating 15% of affordable units in market-rate housing will reduce resistance from those who wrongly claim that welcoming lower income families would harm the value of surrounding homes.

We envision inclusionary zoning as one tool for reversing decades of government-prompted redlining. Rep. Solomon's density bonuses will allow health care and other support workers to live near their employment, and it should offer possibilities for lower-income families to live safely in communities where they can send their children to well-funded neighborhood schools.

The SubA of 7948 embodies modest compromises from the original text. We hope these changes are sufficient to win passage. The Village Common of Rhode Island supports 7948SubA, and we look forward to its passage.

Respectfully,



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