



February 14, 2024

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey
Chairman, House Municipal Government Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: House Bill Number: H7324 Relating to Towns and Cities – Zoning Ordinances

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I am writing to express opposition to House Bill 7324, which seeks to eliminate the use of floor area ratio (FAR) regulation in Rhode Island's zoning enabling law. We believe that this proposed legislation would undermine the ability of local municipalities to effectively manage and regulate land use within their jurisdiction.

Since 1991, FAR regulation has been explicitly enabled in Rhode Island's Zoning Enabling Law under RIGL Section 45-24-33. This provision has allowed municipalities to implement FAR regulations as one of the "Standard Provisions" for local regulatory control. FAR regulation plays a crucial role in ensuring that residential structures are appropriately balanced with the size of the lot, promoting responsible and sustainable development practices. The main objective behind implementing Floor Area Ratio (FAR) regulations is to maintain a proportional relationship between the size of a residential building and the land it occupies. By establishing a ratio that dictates the amount of floor space permitted on a given lot, considering its area, these regulations aim to preserve ample space for off-street parking and essential amenities like OWTS (septic systems), stormwater management features (e.g., detention basins, drainage swales, raingardens), generators, HVAC units, and more.

Eliminating FAR from the state enabling legislation, as proposed in House Bill 7324, would strip local authorities of an important tool for managing land use and development within their communities. This legislation would effectively usurp local management and regulation of land use, undermining the autonomy and decision-making power of municipalities.

Therefore, I urge the committee not to recommend the passage of House Bill 7324. It is essential to sustain local authority to regulate land use effectively, and FAR regulation should be retained as an option for each municipality to adopt as appropriate.

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: Representative Kathleen A. Fogarty, First Vice Chair
Representative June Speakman, Second Vice Chair
Municipal Government and Housing Committee
Ernie Almonte, Executive Director, RILCT