

113 Montauk Road  
Narragansett, RI 02882

February 14, 2024

Chair Casey and Members  
House Municipal Government and Housing Committee  
State House  
Providence, Rhode Island

**Re: Oppose H 7324 – Proposal to Remove Floor Area Ratio from Zoning Enabling Legislation**

Dear Chair Casey and Committee Members:

I oppose H7324 and respectfully request the Committee to not approve this legislation.

H 7324 proposes to remove “floor area ratio” from the state’s enabling legislation for local government zoning.

- Floor area ratio is a well established, and widely used, zoning provision in Rhode Island and in other states around the nation. It is used by municipalities to insure that the total size of a building – its scale or bulk - is reasonable and in proportion to the size of a lot. Floor area ratio zoning protects the character of neighborhoods and insures that buildings are not so big that they negatively impact neighboring property owners.
- H 7324 is counter to the General Assembly’s interest in improving affordable housing in Rhode Island. Floor area ratio helps to keep the scale of houses to a size that is more affordable. Eliminating this provision will result in the construction of larger and less affordable houses.
- Local planning and zoning ordinances have a process that enables property owners to ask for a variance - permission to exceed established building standards. Thus, if a property owner needs to exceed the “floor area ratio” established by a municipality, they can request a variance. The 2023 revisions to the planning and zoning enabling legislation adopted by the General Assembly reduce the standards for granting a variance. Thus, it is now much easier for a property owner to obtain a variance if their request does not negatively impact neighboring property owners.
- H 7324 usurps local government management of land use. Planning and zoning are best regulated by local governments because they are best informed about local issues, needs and conditions.

H7324 should not be approved. Local governments should retain the enabling authority to use “floor area ratio” as a development standard in their zoning ordinance.

Sincerely,



Rupert Friday

*Rupert Friday has a master’s degree in planning and over 30 years professional planning experience including work leading the Maryland Department of Planning’s “Local Government Assistance Program.” He currently is a member of the Narragansett Planning Board and a member of a joint committee of the Planning Board with the Narragansett Affordable Housing Collaborative.*