March 7, 2024

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

RE: House Bill Number: H7382 Relating to Towns and Cities- Zoning Ordinances

Dear Chairman Casey and Honorable Members of Municipal Government and Housing,

I am writing to express our opposition to House Bill 7382. While I understand the intention behind this legislation to address housing issues in Rhode Island, I believe it presents significant challenges to our enduring tradition of local governance and community autonomy.

Maintaining local control and decision-making that reflects community needs is crucial, as emphasized by the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns priorities. Rhode Island has a rich tradition of recognizing that land use regulations, including planning and zoning, are best managed at the municipal level of government. This approach ensures that residents have a voice in shaping the character of their neighborhoods and have control over their own destinies. Our municipal leaders, being closest to the residents, are uniquely positioned to understand the nuances and address the specific needs and concerns of their communities. They are accountable and responsive to the residents they serve.

Changing the definition of household to permit an increase in the number of unrelated individuals living together imposes a one-size-fits-all approach that overlooks the unique circumstances and requirements of individual municipalities.

House Bill 7382 presents a challenge to the authority of local governments in regulating land use and occupancy limits, risking the erosion of our long-standing tradition of local governance and the empowerment of communities to make decisions that best serve their residents.

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

Sincerely,

David M. Bodah
Associate Director

Cc: Honorable Members of Municipal Government and Housing
Ernie Almonte, Executive Director, RILCT