



May 20, 2024

Representative Stephen M. Casey, Chair
House Municipal Government and Housing Committee

RE: Testimony in Support of H 7382, An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – Zoning Ordinances

United Way of Rhode Island (UWRI) is writing to express its support for House Bill 7382. Increasing the maximum number of unrelated people living in a household allowed by state law increases density, which improves affordability. Housing assistance is the top requests heard by 211, the human service helpline here at UWRI, which makes affordable housing our priority.

Policies which increase housing density have a simple positive relationship to housing affordability. The logic proceeds that when housing costs are shared between multiple incomes, the burden of housing costs is lighter on the individual. Fewer individuals living alone means more available housing units, more available housing units introduces competition into the housing market, which drives down the price of housing units. Landlords lose money when their rental units sit vacant, so the incentive to rent at a lower cost is very strong, meaning we could see quick returns on this proposed bill.

UWRI encourages you to consider the consequences of inaction on housing affordability measures. The rapid increase in rents has priced our neighbors out of their homes, and the housing stock shortage has kept our neighbors homeless through dangerous weather events. Rhode Island must take every step possible towards ending the housing crisis, including increasing the maximum number of unrelated people in a household.

Very best,
Peggy Desjarlais
Program Officer, Housing and Economic Development Policy

