



March 12, 2024

The Honorable Stephen Casey
Chair, House Municipal Government and Housing Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: In support for H.7534, *An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – City Housing Authorities*

Dear Chair Casey, First Vice Chair Fogarty, Second Vice Chair Speakman, and Distinguished Committee Members:

I am pleased to write in support of House bill 7534, *An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – City Housing Authorities*, introduced by Representative Cruz. This bill would clarify that RIHousing is the only Public Housing Authority (PHA) authorized to administer Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Project Based Rental Assistance (PBRA), also known as Section 8 multifamily contracts, in Rhode Island.

As the Performance Based Contract Administrator (PBCA) for HUD, RIHousing ensures that Section 8 financed developments in Rhode Island adhere to HUD's requirements. In that role, RIHousing reviews property management tenant files, carries out onsite inspections, oversees the payment of rental assistance to developments and responds to concerns raised by property owners, tenants and elected officials.

RIHousing is one of 33 state Housing Finance Authorities (HFA) serving as their states' PHA to administer these contracts. RIHousing has administered the PBRA contracts on behalf of HUD for over 20 years. We currently oversee 15,494 units in 154 developments located in 27 of Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns. Our staff has an in-depth knowledge of the developments and has built relationships with property managers and tenants. This understanding ensures that we are best positioned to administer the PBRA contracts effectively and respond to tenant concerns promptly.

Our relationship with these developments has also facilitated the long-term preservation of these units as affordable housing. In the last 10 years alone, RIHousing has financed the preservation of 53 Section 8 developments covered by our PBCA contract (over 1/3 of our PBRA portfolio).

In recent years, HUD has made several attempts to rebid these contracts to allow out of state entities to oversee these developments or have these services provided on a regional level. In response, several states, including Vermont, have clarified language within their state laws to ensure that only PHAs with statewide authority may administer PBRA contracts. This bill takes a similar approach and would affirm RIHousing's authority to administer PBRA contracts statewide. The bill would strengthen RIHousing's



ability to continue to serve these developments and tenants when HUD does rebid the contracts as it is expected to do in the near future.

Maintaining state-level oversight of these developments ensures that issues can be addressed quickly and appropriately by locally-based staff responsive to the needs of the developments and their tenants. Having RI Housing serving in this role also allows us to better connect these owners to the resources they need to rehabilitate the developments and preserve their affordability for the long-term. I urge your support for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Carol Ventura'.

Carol Ventura
Executive Director