



March 12, 2024

The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Michael Chippendale, Minority Leader
RI House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H7534 *An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – City Housing Authorities*

Dear Representatives:

I write on behalf of the Public Housing Association of Rhode Island (PHARI), in support of House bill 7534, *An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – City Housing Authorities*, introduced by Representative Cruz.

As you may know, PHARI is a statewide association representing public housing authorities, whose mission is to provide quality subsidized housing throughout Rhode Island. In various capacities, our member housing authorities and their staff work closely with Rhode Island Housing to implement a number of programs, including Section 8 project based rental assistance programs.

House bill 7534 would clarify that Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (RIHousing) is the only Public Housing Agency (PHA) authorized to administer Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Project Based Rental Assistance, also known as Section 8 multifamily contracts, in Rhode Island.

Public Housing Authorities are effective at meeting the needs of their residents because we are based in the community, we know our properties and residents and are able to respond quickly to problems should they arise. Similarly, RIHousing has administered the PBRA contracts on behalf of HUD for over 20 years. As the statewide PHA for Rhode Island, RIHousing is best positioned to administer the PBRA contracts effectively and respond to tenant concerns promptly. Their relationship and knowledge of the developments has also facilitated the long-term preservation of these units as affordable housing which is especially important during the serious affordable housing shortage facing the state.

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HUD has made several attempts to rebid these contracts to allow out-of-state entities to oversee these developments. This bill would ensure that RIHousing can continue to administer the Section 8 multifamily contracts in the state. The bill would not change any other aspect of the role that RIHousing has played with respect to these developments and nor would it impact the role that other PHAs play in the state. The Rhode Islanders we serve are best supported by these contracts being administered by a Rhode Island PHA familiar with the developments and tenants and not an out-of-state entity.

On February 15, 2024, our membership voted unanimously to endorse this bill and we urge your support for it. If you have any questions, please contact me at (401) 944-7210.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert Coupe". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robert Coupe
Co-President of PHARI

Cc: The Honorable Stephen Casey, Chair
Committee on Municipal Government and Housing