



March 28, 2024

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

RE: Bill Number: 7977 RESOLUTION CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

Dear Chairman Casey and Honorable Members of the Municipal Government and Housing Committee:

I am writing to express our support for House Bill H7977, which proposes the establishment of an 11-member commission to study the ability of the Rhode Island educational system to offer degrees or certificates to provide a supply/pipeline of planners, planning technicians, and staff. The RI League of Cities and Towns believes this bill is crucial for addressing the shortage of planning professionals in our state and the absence of a local educational program to establish a pipeline for these essential roles.

Members brought to our attention that the absence of a dedicated educational program for planners in Rhode Island has been a longstanding issue since the merger of the Community Planning Department with landscape architecture at URI over 20 years ago. This has created a significant gap in our ability to train and retain skilled planning professionals locally, leading to challenges in effectively managing development, infrastructure, and community growth.

House Bill H7977 presents a proactive approach to tackle this issue by convening a commission tasked with assessing the current landscape and proposing viable solutions. By reporting back to the General Assembly by January 1, 2025, the commission ensures timely action to address this pressing need.

We would respectfully suggest that part of the scope of the commission include a study regarding the shortage of Building Officials in our state as well. Building Officials play a critical role in ensuring the safety and compliance of construction projects, and addressing any shortages in this profession is equally vital for the well-being of our communities.

In conclusion, we urge support of House Bill H7977 and its efforts to investigate and rectify the shortage of planning professionals in Rhode Island. By investing in the development of a local educational program, we can ensure a more sustainable and prosperous future for our state.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I eagerly anticipate the positive impact that House Bill H7977 will have on our community and look forward to its successful passage.

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

Sincerely,

David M. Bodah
Associate Director

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