



March 28, 2024

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

Re: Support for House bills 7977, 7978, 7979, 7980, 7981, 7984

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

RIHousing is grateful for the leadership that Speaker Shekarchi and other General Assembly members have shown in continuing to make housing a top priority for the state. The General Assembly has been a key partner to help address the state's critical shortage of affordable housing. We are proud to support those efforts through our membership on the Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Commission and the Land Use Commission and through the implementation of approved programs and policies.

In particular, we applaud the Speaker and the sponsors of the package of fifteen housing bills that were introduced earlier this month for continuing to think creatively about how to address Rhode Island's housing challenges. Rhode Island is facing a critical housing shortage and residents continue to face rising housing costs. We look forward to working with the General Assembly and other partners in the months ahead to pass legislation that can make a real difference to in creating tools and streamlining processes to address the housing crisis.

Several bills from that package of housing legislation are before this Committee tonight, including H7977, H7978, H7979, H7980, H7981, and H7984.

**H7977** would address the shortage of planning professionals in the state by establishing a commission to study the ability of the Rhode Island education system to offer degrees or certificates to provide a supply/pipeline of planners, planning technicians and staff. **H7978** would require municipalities to implement electronic permitting for all development applications pursuant to zoning and the subdivision of land. **H7979** creates a pilot program giving municipalities the authority to combine zoning and planning boards into one. **H7980** allows, by right, manufactured homes constructed in accordance with HUD regulations to be considered a single-family home in certain circumstances. **H7981** would allow, by right, residential uses in commercial zones unless public health and/or safety would prohibit the use.

We are also in support of **H7984** with several recommended amendments. This bill which would allow municipalities to count mobile home units that meet certain requirement as affordable housing. Mobiles homes could be applied toward the goal of 10% of a municipality's housing stock to be low- and moderate-income housing. We understand that several amendments have been proposed which would clarify that mobile homes counted toward a community's 10% housing goal under this section shall count as .5 units, that the eligibility of

these units shall be confirmed and reported by a monitoring agent, and further clarifies the criteria associated with mobile homes meeting the Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards. We support these amendments.

Each of these bills continues the General Assembly's work to address the housing crisis in Rhode Island whether by streamlining the permitting process by moving to electronic processes, building the capacity of local planning offices, or making it easier to develop mixed use developments in commercial zones.

RIHousing looks forward to working with the Committee, the Speaker, and the bill sponsors to achieve the goal of increasing the supply of affordable housing in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,



Carol Ventura  
Executive Director