



March 28, 2024

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey
Chair
House Municipal Government and Housing Committee

RE: H 7977, H 7978, H 7979, H 7980, H 7981, H 7984

Dear Chair Casey and Committee Members:

On behalf of the more than 6,000 members of the Rhode Island Association of REALTORS® (RIAR), we thank you for the opportunity to fully support Speaker Shekarchi's housing legislation that is being considered by this committee.

REALTORS® appreciate the leadership in the House of Representatives and your commitment to improving homeownership opportunities and access to affordable housing. As you are aware, the foundation of our economy is housing. According to the National Association of REALTORS®, the Rhode Island real estate industry accounted for more than \$12 billion or 17 percent of the gross state product in 2023.¹

The legislation this committee is considering, if approved, will play a significant role in addressing Rhode Island's housing shortage. For instance, creating new educational opportunities to address the shortage in planners across Rhode Island is overdue. We know that planners play a role in affecting our local housing market. Unfortunately, the absence of a pipeline of planners will have far-reaching implications on housing affordability, environmental sustainability, and ineffective infrastructure. That is why RIAR strongly supports Speaker Shekarchi's ambition of creating a degree program for aspiring planners.

RIAR also wants to commend Speaker Shekarchi and the sponsors of H 7978, which would require municipalities to implement electronic permitting. While some municipalities should be complimented for implementing and/or enhancing their permitting process, some cities and towns have not succeeded in bringing their systems into the 21st century. It is our hope that the State of Rhode Island will work with cities and towns on implementing electronic permitting, as developers require predictability to make housing projects successful.

Finally, RIAR and our members believe that creating more housing opportunities welcomes homeownership and stabilized rent prices. By allowing residential uses in commercial zoning (H 7981), the State of Rhode Island will be expanding density using thoughtful development to close the housing gap. According to 2023 HousingWorksRI's Fact Book, there are only five

¹ [The Economic Impact of Typical Home Sale- Rhode Island](#)

communities complying with the state's Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act that mandates ten percent of housing stock in every municipality as affordable.² H 7981 will assist cities and towns that are not meeting or exceeding the state's goal.

In conclusion, RIAR always welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with members of the House of Representatives on measures that increase homeownership opportunities, while addressing our state's housing shortage. We urge this committee to approve H 7977, H 7978, H 7979, H 7980, H 7981, and H 7984.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Philip B Tedesco". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "T".

Philip B Tedesco, RCE, CAE, CIPS
Chief Executive Officer
RI Association of REALTORS®

² [2023 Housing Fact Book- HousingWorksRI at RWU](#)