



April 10, 2025

Honorable Chairman Stephen Casey
House Municipal Government and Housing Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H-5964 – An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – Zoning Ordinances

Dear Chairman Casey and Committee Members:

Our organization, the RI Chapter of the American Planning Association, is opposed to this bill, which amends the standard provisions section of the Zoning Enabling Act to prohibit any municipality from having a zoning district with a minimum lot size requirement of more than:

1. 2,500 SF for lots that are served by public water and sewer and are within ¼ mile of a public service transit stop;
2. 5,000 SF for any other lot that is served by public water and sewer; and
3. One acre for every other lot in Rhode Island (accounting for well and on/site sewage capacity).

This monumental rezoning across the state must be enacted by July 1, 2026. It is a statewide mandate that directly conflicts with the initial language in the amended section 45-24-33(b)(3)(d):

"Nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict a municipality's right, within state and local regulations, to establish its own minimum lot size per zoning district in its town or city"

However, the overrule of local land use control and the logistical difficulties of enacting such an overhaul of zoning across the state do not compare to the other critical issues – and that is what this mandate of statewide zoning would mean in terms of sustainability and the environment, the ability of public infrastructure to support the required additional density, as well as local character and quality of life. This would greatly impact both the already-built environment, and the state's farmlands and rural areas. The restrictions above are even preceded by the Orwellian language: "in order to conserve the state's farmlands and forests". Rhode Island is too special, unique and varied to succumb to this kind of monotonous land use control.

Sincerely,

Jane Weidman
Legislative Committee Chair

cc RI League of Cities and Towns