

April 7, 2022

The Honorable Ryan Pearson, Chairman
Members
Senate Finance Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Subject: Support for Article 1, Section 16 of Budget bill H7123

Dear Chairman Pearson and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Senior Agenda Coalition of Rhode Island I am pleased to support the use of ARPA funds as proposed in Article 1, Section 16 to advance affordable housing in our state through a comprehensive array of funding elements as proposed in the Governor's budget.

We also recognize and commend the major commitment for supporting affordable housing made by the 2021 legislature including creating a permanent source of funding to support affordable housing.

The Senior Agenda recognizes the need to increase the availability of safe and affordable housing for all families across the state. The need to support affordable, safe and accessible housing options is especially important for our seniors so that they have the option to remain living at home and in the community of their choice as they grow older.

The number of older households who are cost burdened – paying more than 30% of income on housing costs is alarming. Almost half (49%) of older renters are cost-burdened as are 30.5% of older homeowners. (US Census 2019 Table S0103). The recent increase in the cost of housing is particularly difficult for lower-income seniors (16% have income below 150% of the federal poverty level) and the many older households living on fixed incomes which fail to keep up with inflation.

We are also concerned that our state has such an old housing stock which often presents problems for persons with mobility needs. We suggest funds be made available for retrofitting housing units to promote accessibility and, to the extent possible, to incorporate accessibility features into the design of new homes constructed or renovated with these funds. We also support efforts to encourage communities to allow for Accessible Dwelling Units which would give more housing options for persons including older adults and those with disabilities. And we ask you to consider increasing the funding as suggested by HOMES RI. Thank you for your favorable consideration of this important opportunity to expand affordable housing in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,



Maureen Maigret
Policy Advisor
Senior Agenda Coalition

CC: Bernie Beaudreau