

HOPE Model Housing and Homelessness Policy Platform

This document is intended to highlight priorities for candidates seeking to support the needs of Rhode Islanders experiencing housing instability. These priorities were identified and developed through partnership with community organizers, academics, researchers, and service providers in the state of Rhode Island.

Short Term, Actionable Priorities for the 2019 Legislative Session

1. Pass legislation, similar to Rhode Island [H7528](#) and [S2301](#), that legally prohibits landlords from denying housing based on an individual's source of income, including possession of a Housing Choice or "Section 8" Voucher or other government rental assistance. Additionally, pass legislation, similar to Rhode Island [H5697](#), that renders discrimination on the basis of housing status unenforceable.
2. Pass legislation, similar to Washington D.C.'s 2017 Expanding Access to Justice Act ([B21-0879](#)), that funds a pilot project to study the impact of civil right to counsel for low-income Rhode Islanders in housing cases.
3. Pass legislation, similar to Rhode Island [H8085](#), that seals court files related to housing cases which were resolved in the tenant's favor.
4. Pass legislation, similar to California's 2014 [AB 1733](#), that waives fees for securing government IDs and vital records for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Long Term Priorities to Address Rhode Island's Lack of Affordable Housing

1. Significantly expand the State's commitment to low-income housing.
 - a. Make affordable housing a line item on the state budget with legislation similar to [H7316](#).
 - b. Ensure that the State's annual investment in low-income housing is comparable to that of states with similar stature.
 - c. Create a cabinet level position that focuses exclusively on low-income and affordable housing.
 - d. Issue guidelines that ensure that cities and towns not meeting the mandated 10% year-round affordable housing requirements do so or face meaningful penalties, like significant reductions in state aid.
2. Creatively and compassionately address the needs of Rhode Islanders experiencing homelessness.
 - a. Commit to keeping transportation accessible to low-income and disabled Rhode Islanders by permanently restoring the No-Fare Bus Pass program.
 - b. Expand policies and services to encompass "doubled-up" individuals and families.
 - c. Petition the federal government to use Medicaid funds to house those who are chronically homeless with legislation similar to [S2083](#).
 - d. Commit to ending the criminalization of homelessness by repealing state laws, policies, and practices that prohibit or limit the use of public space and services by people experiencing homelessness for life sustaining activities.
3. Promote housing stability.
 - a. Increase the State's commitment to preventative services that keep Rhode Islanders housed.
 - b. Establish a right to counsel in civil court cases regarding evictions.
 - c. Establish a healthy housing fund that fills service gaps to address lead hazard, weatherization, and mold.
4. Support the strategies recommended in the Housing Opportunities Initiative Framework.

Created by Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE) in collaboration with:*

Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless (RICH)*

House of Hope CDC*

Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE)

HousingWorks RI*

Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI)*

Signs of Providence*

**Supporting participants of the Housing Opportunities Initiative Framework*