



2021 Legislative Session Recap

The 2021 Rhode Island General Assembly session resulted in a number of important wins for housing on both the legislative and appropriations side. These included:

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget:

- **Housing Production Fund:** The budget established a new Housing Production Fund through an increase of the Real Estate Conveyance Tax on home sales over \$800,000 and capitalized the Fund with \$25 million. RIHousing will administer the program according to program guidelines approved by the Housing Resources Commission's Coordinating Committee.
- **Eliminates Double Taxation of Affordable Housing:** The budget ended the double taxation of affordable housing developments during certain real estate transactions, a provision RIHousing and the Housing Network have advocated for since 2016.
- **Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Housing Position:** The budget established this position within the Executive Office of Commerce, with broad authorities and reporting responsibilities. Josh Saal was named to the position and begins this month.
- **Pay for Success:** A five-year Pay for Success pilot was included in the budget, funded at \$1,500,000 per year up to \$6 million to be administered by the RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

Fiscal Year 2022 Supplemental Budget: The General Assembly met last week to appropriate approximately 10% of the State's ARPA dollars, including:

- \$15 million for the development of affordable housing to be administered by RIHousing
- \$12 million for the acquisition of properties for redevelopment as affordable housing to be administered by RIHousing
- \$1.5 million for expanding housing navigation and stabilization services to address the rise in pandemic-related homelessness to be administered by OHCD in conjunction with RIHousing
- \$500,000 for broadband services
- \$500,000 dedicated to expanding programmatic and administrative capacity for affordable housing in Rhode Island (OHCD)

Legislative Priorities:

Source of Income Discrimination: The General Assembly passed legislation prohibiting discrimination in housing against those persons who have a lawful source of income and the Governor signed the bill on April 15, 2021.

Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act Commission: This bill Created a 17-member commission to study implementation of the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act. RIHousing holds a seat on the commission.

Land Use Commission: The House passed this legislation creating an 18-member commission to study the state's land use, housing and environmental regulations and provide recommendations to promote land use which allows for sustainable and equitable economic growth. James Thorsen, representing RIHousing's Board of Commissioners, has a seat on the commission.

2022 Legislative Priorities

- **FY2023 Budget:** Support Governor McKee's housing related proposals for State Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA)
- **Emergency Rental Assistance eviction filing bill:** RIHousing is working with the Center for Justice on legislation that would require landlords to apply for Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) before filing for eviction for non-payment. Many states and localities that have been most successful at expending their ERA funds have similar requirements in place.
- **Low and Moderate Income Housing Act/ Land Use Commission:** As a member of both commissions, RIHousing staff will provide input on potential legislative proposals that emerge from the work of these commissions to ensure that they encourage and facilitate the production of affordable housing.
- **State Housing Appeals Board (SHAB):** The SHAB currently has two vacancies which could seriously impact its ability to hear comprehensive permit appeals. RIHousing staff is working with the Administration to identify candidates to fill those vacancies.
- **Defense on existing housing related statutes:** We anticipate many bills dealing with housing related issues in the 2022 session. RIHousing will continue to advocate to preserve and improve important existing statutes including the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act, the 8% Law and Foreclosure Mediation. Staff will also review new legislation to determine its impact on access to and production of affordable housing and RIHousing's ability to fulfill its mission.

