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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2013

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT - RHODE ISLAND HOUSING
RESOURCES ACT OF 1998

Introduced By: Senators Crowley, Metts, and Pichardo

Date Introduced: February 28, 2013

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 42-128-1 and 42-128-5 of the General Laws in Chapter 42-128
2 entitled "Rhode Island Housing Resources Act of 1998" are hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **42-128-1. Findings.** -- (a) Rhode Island has an older housing stock which contributes
4 invaluable to community character, and in order to maintain the stability of neighborhoods and to
5 sustain health communities, it is necessary to have programs for housing and community
6 development and revitalization.

7 (b) Rhode Island has an active private sector that is engaged in supplying housing.

8 (c) Rhode Island has an active non-profit housing sector, which can, if provided adequate
9 support, assist low and moderate income persons and works to improve conditions in
10 neighborhoods and communities.

11 (d) Housing that is not adequately maintained is a source of blight in communities and a
12 cause of public health problems. Public health and safety are impaired by poor housing
13 conditions; poisoning from lead paint and respiratory disease (asthma) are significant housing
14 related health problems in Rhode Island.

15 (e) There is an increasing need for supported living arrangements for the elderly and a
16 continuing need for supported living arrangements for persons who are disabled and/or homeless.

17 (f) Fair housing, and the potential of unequal treatment of individuals based on race,
18 ethnicity, age, disability, and family, must be given continuing attention.

1 (g) Housing costs consume a disproportionate share of income for many Rhode
2 Islanders; housing affordability is a continuing problem, especially for first time home buyers and
3 lower and moderate income renters; the high cost of housing adversely affects the expansion of
4 Rhode Island's economy. Housing affordability and availability affect conditions of
5 homelessness. The high cost of housing and the lack of affordable, decent housing for low
6 income households is a source of hardship for very low income persons and families in Rhode
7 Island.

8 (h) The Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation, which has provided
9 more than two decades of assistance in addressing issues of both the affordability of home
10 ownership and rental housing and the preservation of the housing stock for low and moderate
11 income persons, is facing future funding shortfalls and must either increase revenues or reduce
12 programs in order to remain viable.

13 (i) The federal government has been reducing its commitment to housing since 1981, and
14 there is no indication that earlier levels of federal support for housing will be restored.

15 (j) Public housing authorities, which rely on federal support that is being reconsidered,
16 have been and continue to be an important housing resource for low income families and the
17 elderly.

18 (k) Rhode Island, unlike most other states, does not have an agency or department of
19 state government with comprehensive responsibility for housing.

20 (l) It is necessary and desirable in order to protect that public health and to promote the
21 public welfare, to establish a housing resources agency and a housing resources commission for
22 the purposes of improving housing conditions, promoting housing affordability, engaging in
23 community development activities, and assisting the urban, suburban, and rural communities of
24 the state.

25 (m) Homelessness has been on the rise according to the statewide homeless management
26 information system database;

27 (n) According to the state department of administration, the state currently contributes
28 one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) in funding from the consolidated homeless fund
29 which is used for emergency expansion winter shelter across the state from November 1st to
30 March 31st each year;

31 (o) The total funding needed for the emergency expansion winter shelter system is four
32 hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000), therefore a shortfall of two hundred fifty thousand dollars
33 (\$250,000) exists. This justification is documented through the Rhode Island homeless
34 management information system showing that from 2011 to 2012 there were more individuals

1 [staying in the adult shelter system longer \(at an average of one hundred \(100\) days in 2011 =](#)
2 [319\).](#)

3 **42-128-5. Purposes.** -- The purposes of the commission shall be:

4 (1) To develop and promulgate state policies, and plans, for housing and housing
5 production and performance measures for housing programs established pursuant to state law.

6 (2) To coordinate activities among state agencies and political subdivisions pertaining to
7 housing.

8 (3) To promote the stability of and quality of life in communities and neighborhoods.

9 (4) To provide opportunities for safe, sanitary, decent, adequate and affordable housing
10 in Rhode Island.

11 (5) To encourage public-private partnerships that foster the production, rehabilitation,
12 development, maintenance, and improvement of housing and housing conditions, especially for
13 low and moderate income people.

14 (6) To foster and support no-profit organizations, including community development
15 corporations, and their associations and intermediaries, that are engaged in providing and housing
16 related services.

17 (7) To encourage and support partnerships between institutions of higher education and
18 neighborhoods to develop and retain quality, healthy housing and sustainable communities.

19 (8) To facilitate private for-profit production and rehabilitation of housing for diverse
20 populations and income groups.

21 (9) To provide, facilitate, and/or support the provisions of technical assistance.

22 [\(10\) To provide for a rental assistance and general supportive housing operating fund to](#)
23 [assist in providing safe and affordable housing to shelter residents, and, funding to provide for](#)
24 [expansion winter shelter operations while necessary. Funds will be administered by the](#)
25 [department of administration, office of housing and community development, through the](#)
26 [housing resources commission. They will be charged with drafting regulations to administer the](#)
27 [program and setting up a competitive request for proposal \(RFP\) process to determine the](#)
28 [maximum impact for distribution of funds.](#)

29 SECTION 2. There is hereby appropriated out of a dedicated funding stream of money in
30 the treasury appropriated for the fiscal year 2013-2014, the sum of three million, two hundred and
31 fifty thousand dollars (\$3,250,000) for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this act (three
32 million dollars (\$3,000,000) for rental assistance and operating and two hundred fifty thousand
33 dollars (\$250,000) for winter shelter expansion operations), and the state controller is hereby
34 authorized to draw his/her orders upon the general treasurer for the payment of said sum, or so

1 much thereof as may be from time to time required, upon receipt by him/her of properly
2 authenticated vouchers.

3 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT - RHODE ISLAND HOUSING
RESOURCES ACT OF 1998

1 This act would add to the findings and purposes of the housing resource act as they
2 pertain to the needs of shelter residents, and provides for an appropriation for the fiscal year
3 2013-2014 in the amount of three million, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$3,250,000).

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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