

**2019 -- S 1005**

LC002858

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019**

**S E N A T E R E S O L U T I O N**

**CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON HOUSING, TASKED WITH CONDUCTING A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF RHODE ISLAND'S HOUSING SYSTEM**

Introduced By: Senator Frank Lombardo

Date Introduced: June 25, 2019

Referred To: Placed on the Senate Consent Calendar

1           WHEREAS, According to the Federal government, housing is recognized as affordable if  
2 thirty percent or less of the household's yearly income is used on housing costs, and households  
3 are considered "cost burdened" if more than thirty percent of their yearly income is used on  
4 housing costs; and

5           WHEREAS, Households are recognized as severely cost burdened when they spend more  
6 than fifty percent of their yearly income on housing costs; and

7           WHEREAS, The increase in the cost of housing and the scarcity of new housing has  
8 caused more than one hundred and forty-five thousand households to be cost burdened in Rhode  
9 Island; and

10           WHEREAS, The one hundred and forty-five thousand households that are considered  
11 cost burdened in Rhode Island represent thirty-five percent of all households in Rhode Island; and

12           WHEREAS, Out of those one hundred and forty-five thousand households, forty-four  
13 percent are severely cost burdened; and

14           WHEREAS, Households that are cost burdened have greatly affected our state's  
15 economy; and

16           WHEREAS, In 2016, HousingWorksRI found that nearly one hundred and thirty-two  
17 thousand households could have spent more than nine hundred and forty million dollars in the  
18 economy, building equity in their homes, or affording daily necessities had they not been cost  
19 burdened; and

1           WHEREAS, If a household only earned a yearly income of fifty thousand dollars, there is  
2 merely one municipality where it could affordably buy a median-priced home and only four  
3 municipalities where it could affordably rent a two-bedroom apartment; and

4           WHEREAS, Rhode Island State Law sets a goal that ten percent of every municipality's  
5 housing units shall meet the guidelines of Low and Moderate Income Housing, but only six  
6 municipalities meet this goal; and

7           WHEREAS, The increase in low vacancy rates has decreased the number of days a house  
8 or apartment is on the market, thereby increasing competition in the market and increasing sale  
9 prices; and

10           WHEREAS, From 2016 to 2017, Rhode Island's multifamily building permits decreased  
11 by forty-four percent, while Boston and Connecticut saw drastic increases – such permits doubled  
12 in Boston and increased by eighty-nine percent in Connecticut, according to the 2018 Housing  
13 Facts Book by HousingWorksRI; and

14           WHEREAS, Furthermore, in 2018, HousingWorksRI estimated that the projected need  
15 for additional housing in Rhode Island by the year 2025 will range from 32,550 to 34,790  
16 multifamily units and from 5,000 to 5,800 single-family homes; and

17           WHEREAS, Research has shown that there are significant health and social benefits  
18 when people are not constantly concerned about affordability and having to endure an unstable  
19 living environment; and

20           WHEREAS, Children are negatively impacted by not having a stable living environment;  
21 for example, homeless children and youth have the highest rate of school absenteeism; and

22           WHEREAS, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and other states have created task forces or  
23 commissions to assess housing demands, address affordable housing concerns, and develop plans  
24 to build housing units; now, therefore be it

25           RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission on housing be and the same is hereby  
26 created consisting of fifteen (15) members: three (3) of whom shall be members of the Rhode  
27 Island Senate, not more than two (2) from the same political party, to be appointed by the  
28 President of the Senate; and at least twelve (12) of whom shall have relevant experience in  
29 housing, business, finance, development, real estate, education, advocacy, academic research, or  
30 for-profit or nonprofit experience related to the goals of the commission, to be appointed by the  
31 President of the Senate; and

32           In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a permanent advisory  
33 commission, a legislative study commission, or any commission created by a General Assembly  
34 resolution, the appointing authority may appoint a member of the general public to serve in lieu

1 of a legislator, provided that the Senate President or the Minority Leader of the political party that  
2 is entitled to the appointment consents to the appointment of the member of the general public.

3 The purpose of said commission shall be to conduct a comprehensive review of Rhode  
4 Island's housing system, evaluate concerns that may impede development, and make  
5 recommendations to the Senate about ways to increase access to safe and affordable housing that  
6 meets the needs of a wide range of incomes and improves housing opportunities within the state.

7 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at  
8 the call of the Chair of the commission, who shall be appointed by the President of the Senate.

9 Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.

10 A quorum of the commission shall consist of a majority of its membership, and the  
11 membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

12 The commission shall assemble no less than four (4) times, or more often at the call of  
13 the Chair, upon written notice of each meeting stating the place, day, and time of the meeting,  
14 along with the purpose and/or agenda of the meeting.

15 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,  
16 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or  
17 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

18 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide  
19 suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

20 RESOLVED, That the commission shall report initial findings, recommendations, and  
21 potential legislative proposals on or before January 31, 2020, and a final report containing  
22 additional recommendations on or before October 16, 2020, to the President of the Senate, and  
23 said commission shall expire on December 31, 2020.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

S E N A T E R E S O L U T I O N

CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON HOUSING, TASKED WITH  
CONDUCTING A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF RHODE ISLAND'S HOUSING SYSTEM

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1           This resolution would create a fifteen (15) member special legislative commission on  
2 housing, which would be tasked with making a comprehensive review of Rhode Island's housing  
3 system and providing initial recommendations and potential legislative proposals to the Senate on  
4 or before January 31, 2020, and final recommendations on or before October 16, 2020, and said  
5 commission shall expire on December 31, 2020.

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