

2025 -- H 5970

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

JOINT RESOLUTION

CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY AND PROVIDE
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CREATION OF A STATEWIDE WHOLE-HOME
REPAIRS PROGRAM

Introduced By: Representatives Handy, Stewart, Casimiro, Speakman, Potter, Fogarty,
and Cortvriend

Date Introduced: February 28, 2025

Referred To: House Municipal Government & Housing

1 WHEREAS, Rhode Island faces a severe housing supply shortage that impacts all
2 residents, especially those with low- and moderate-incomes. This affordability challenge affects
3 the cost of living, limiting the state's economic competitiveness and ability to attract new talent.

4 WHEREAS, According to a 2023 report commissioned by the Rhode Island Foundation,
5 Rhode Island has the third oldest housing stock in the US, with seventy-five percent of the total
6 housing stock built before 1980. Among New England states, Rhode Island has the highest
7 percentage of housing built before 1940 and the second highest percentage of housing built before
8 1980.

9 WHEREAS, According to the same 2023 Rhode Island Foundation report, about one-
10 third of all households are housing cost-burdened, which means they spend more than 20 percent
11 of their income on housing-related expenses.

12 WHEREAS, Many of these single and multifamily homes need repair, and homeowners
13 often lack the resources to maintain them.

14 WHEREAS, Too many Rhode Islanders live in unsafe homes with leaking roofs,
15 unreliable and inefficient heat, and/or unsafe wiring. Deferred maintenance can lead to exposure
16 to mold, lead and excessively high utility bills.

17 WHEREAS, There are energy efficiency programs to upgrade insulation and HVAC
18 units, however, many Rhode Islanders cannot take advantage of them because they are unable to
19 afford the repairs to their homes, such as upgrading electrical systems, to make them eligible for

1 these programs.

2 WHEREAS, The programs available to help constituents repair their homes and keep
3 them safe, efficient and habitable are spread out over several state agencies and not-for-profit
4 organizations and can be difficult for homeowners to find and access; now, therefore be it

5 RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission be and the same is hereby created
6 consisting of twelve (12) members: three (3) of whom shall be members of the House of
7 Representatives, not more than two (2) from the same political party, to be appointed by the
8 Speaker of the House; three (3) of whom shall be members of the Senate, not more than two (2)
9 from the same political party, to be appointed by the Senate President; one of whom shall be the
10 President of the RI Builders Association, or designee; one of whom shall be the Executive
11 Director of Rhode Island Housing, or designee; one of whom shall be the President of the
12 Housing Network of Rhode Island, or designee; one of whom shall be the Director of the Office
13 of Energy Resources or designee; one of whom shall be the Director of Healthy Aging, or
14 designee; and one of whom shall be the Director of the Comprehensive Community Action
15 Program, or designee.

16 In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a legislative study
17 commission, or any commission created by a General Assembly resolution, the appointing
18 authority may appoint a member of the general public to serve in lieu of a legislator.

19 The purpose of said commission shall be to make a comprehensive study and provide
20 recommendations for the creation of a statewide whole-home repairs program, drawing on
21 existing programs and suggesting funding resources to fill in the gaps. This program would
22 coordinate resources for low-income homeowners and owners of small multifamily units (less
23 than 6 units) to repair their buildings, including roofing, siding, windows, electrical, heating, and
24 air conditioning, and upgrades to make the building eligible for energy efficiency programs, to
25 ensure the homes are safe and energy efficient. The resources should include, but not be limited
26 to, the Weatherization Assistance Program, utility-run energy efficiency programs, lead
27 abatement programs, and adaptive modification programs.

28 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at
29 the call of the Speaker of the House and The President of the Senate and organize, and shall select
30 a chairperson.

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

32 The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

33 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,
34 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or

1 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution

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

4 RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the
5 General Assembly on or before January 5, 2026, and said commission shall expire on March 5,
6 2026.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
JOINT RESOLUTION
CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY AND PROVIDE
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CREATION OF A STATEWIDE WHOLE-HOME
REPAIRS PROGRAM

1 This resolution would create a twelve (12) member special legislative commission whose
2 purpose it would be to make a comprehensive study and provide recommendations for the
3 creation of a statewide whole-home repairs program, drawing on existing programs and
4 suggesting funding resources to fill in the gaps, and who would report back to the General
5 Assembly on or before January 5, 2026, and said commission would expire on March 5, 2026.

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