To: Rich Rainer

From: Linda Ujifusa and J. Mark Ryan

Re: 2020 Rhode Island General Assembly Legislative Priorities

Date: 10-21-2019

1) *Support A 2020 Green Economy Bond*

Climate change is an existential threat. It is imperative that we continue to fund projects that would improve public safety and resiliency in the face of increased flooding, major storm events, and ecosystem damage. Moreover, it is vital that additional funding for a "green economy" become available to municipalities to promote environmental protection and sustainable economic growth. We urge our legislators to support a 2020 Green Economy Bond similar to the one passed in 2018. http://dem.ri.gov/greenclean/documents/greencleanbond18fs.pdf

2) *Support funding RI Municipal Infrastructure grants*

The General Assembly passed a bill (H-7102 / S-2239) creating the framework for a RI Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program, but without funding in the FY19 State Budget to implement it. The program is modeled after the very successful MassWorks Program in Massachusetts that has stimulated significant private investment in the revitalization of urban and town centers across the Commonwealth. Portsmouth needs this kind of help funding our infrastructure needs and we urge our legislators to advocate for annual funding, as recommended by GrowSmart RI and RIBI.

3) *Amend the general laws to clarify the tax appeal procedures*

Legislation should be re-introduced to clarify that real estate property taxpayers are not entitled to appeal the valuation of their property each year, but may only challenge the value in the year of the last update or revaluation, as indicated in the 2001 amendments to RI General Laws § 44-5-15 and § 44-5-26. In Spring 2018, the Rhode Island Supreme Court issued a 3-2 ruling that opened the door to plaintiffs contesting their values more frequently than every three years. The decision could open the door to numerous costly appeals and must be clarified.

Other legislation:

4) *Protect our citizens' health and welfare*

a) *Do not cut Medicaid funding.*

Currently in RI, federal Medicaid covers about 1 out of 4 children and 3 out of 5 nursing home residents. https://www.kff.org/interactive/medicaid-state-fact-sheets/ Federal cuts of Medicaid severely threaten these vulnerable populations, as well as low income and disabled people. RI legislators must not vote to further cut Medicaid funding.

b) *Support single payer improved "Medicare for all" health insurance*

We urge our state legislators to pass House and Senate resolutions urging our federal legislators to support legislation creating a single payer improved "Medicare-for-all" health insurance program, HR 1384 and S 1129. Rhode Island's economy would be significantly improved as current burdens on employers and employees are reduced and government entities (such as the Town of Portsmouth) are relieved of Other Post Employment Benefit (OPEB) debts mainly due to health insurance costs.   Every industrialized nation in the world, except the United States, offers guaranteed universal health insurance under a "single payer" type system and enjoys better health outcomes for about one-half the cost. For more information, see: www.pnhp.org.

5) ***Help shift the tax burden off Portsmouth homeowners by reversing past failed "trickle down" tax cuts***

In 2006, the RI General Assembly passed legislation to cut taxes for the wealthiest Rhode Islanders, and basically helped only those making over $336,550 annually. See http://www.rifuture.org/ris-tax-cuts-for-the-rich-were-2nd-biggest-of-decade/ While it was argued that these cuts would improve the RI economy in some "trickle down" fashion, there is no evidence of that. There is also no evidence of "millionaire flight." https://itep.org/no-need-for-the-mythbusters-the-millionaire-tax-flight-myth-is-busted-again/ All that has happened is that the tax burden has shifted to the middle class. https://upriseri.com/2018-10-17-who-pays/ We urge our legislators to work to reverse the 2006 tax cut legislation.