



Rhode Island Housing Opens New HelpCenter and Hardest Hit Fund Office in Warwick

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By RealEstateRama Staff

WASHINGTON, D.C. – (RealEstateRama) — Governor Gina Raimondo, U.S. Senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse, Congressmen Jim Langevin and David Cicilline, Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin and mayors from Rhode Island cities and towns affected by the housing and foreclosure crisis joined Rhode Island Housing to announce the grand opening of Rhode Island Housing’s HelpCenter and Hardest Hit Fund office in Warwick and to discuss the deployment of more than \$36 million in additional funding for the Hardest Hit Fund Rhode Island (HHFRI) program. These funds were allocated to Rhode Island by the U.S. Treasury earlier this year to help families avoid losing their homes, stabilize neighborhoods, and prevent the spread of foreclosures.

“Rhode Island Housing has had tremendous success in helping Rhode Island families avoid foreclosure through the Hardest Hit program,” said Governor Gina M. Raimondo. “The first round of Hardest Hit funding provided a lifeline to more than 3,000 homeowners in our state – and we know that the vast majority of these families were still in their homes two years after working with the program. This is a proven strategy to stabilize families and neighborhoods, and I am thrilled that Rhode Island has received a second round of funding.”

In 2010, the Obama Administration created the Hardest Hit program to assist struggling families in the wake of the financial crisis. Originally, Rhode Island was not included in the Hardest Hit Fund program. But Senator Reed and Senator Whitehouse successfully worked with the Obama Administration to include Rhode Island, and other states that had been hit the hardest by the mortgage crisis, in the program. The Obama Administration expanded the program in March of 2010 to include 18 states and the District of Columbia, with an initial investment of \$43 million in Hardest Hit funding for the state of Rhode Island. Since then, Rhode Island has now received

\$115,975,303 in total Hardest Hit funding to help prevent foreclosures and stabilize the state's housing market.

“I commend Rhode Island Housing for opening this new center to expand their reach and help more struggling homeowners who are fighting to keep their homes. This center is a great resource that lets people know what rights, options, and resources they have. Preventing avoidable foreclosures can really help stabilize neighborhoods and strengthen our communities. I am proud to have fought to bring Hardest Hit funding to the great state of Rhode Island and will continue working to ensure it is put to good use,” said U.S. Senator Jack Reed, a senior member of the Senate Banking Committee, which oversees federal housing policy, and the Ranking Member of the Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees the funding for federal housing programs.

Rhode Island Housing was designated by the U.S. Treasury to oversee HHFRI, which is a federal program that helps prevent avoidable foreclosures by assisting homeowners unable to make their mortgage payments due to a documented financial hardship.

“This latest federal grant, along with the new HelpCenter in Warwick, will boost Rhode Island Housing's efforts to assist homeowners and homebuyers across our state,” said Senator Sheldon Whitehouse. “I commend Executive Director Barbara Fields for her leadership in working to ensure that all Rhode Islanders have access to affordable housing.”

The additional funding enables Rhode Island Housing to build upon its great success in administering HHFRI funds: Rhode Island was recognized as one of the first hardest hit states to fully distribute its funds in previous rounds.

The HHFRI program has received a total of nearly \$116 million, which it has used to help more than 3,000 Rhode Island families – located in every community throughout the state – to remain in their homes.

“The Hardest Hit Fund provides critical emergency resources for families that have fallen on tough times, and this new HelpCenter will additionally ensure that Rhode Islanders are informed, prepared, and empowered to stay in their homes and make smart financial choices in the future,” said Congressman Jim Langevin. “I'm so impressed by the work that Rhode Island Housing is doing with housing assistance, keeping families and communities intact, and I am proud to support their efforts to prevent foreclosures and increase access to safe, affordable housing.”

“The Hardest Hit Fund has already helped more than 3,000 Rhode Island families facing the threat of foreclosure stay in their homes, and I am delighted that Rhode Island is receiving an additional \$36 million to support this important work,” said Congressman Cicilline, who has worked relentlessly to support essential housing programs at the federal level and has advocated for greater resources to help Rhode Island homeowners facing foreclosure. “This critical funding will strengthen communities across our state and ensure that more families will be able to keep their homes.”

Rhode Island homeowners can learn more about HHFRI during a series of public meetings, the first of which will be held on July 27 at 6:00 p.m. at the East Providence Public Library. For a complete list of community events, as well as more information about the program and how to apply, visit www.HHFRI.org.

“Over the last decade, many Rhode Islanders have faced severe economic challenges,” said Commerce Secretary Stefan Pryor. “With a renewed focus on economic development, the Raimondo administration is working hard to ensure that every family can make it in Rhode Island. Additional Hardest Hit funds will provide the housing assistance that many Rhode Island families need.”

HHFRI complements existing federal and lender programs, and is only available to Rhode Islanders who have exhausted all other options and do not own any other real estate. The type of assistance available varies but generally is in the form of either a loan modification from lenders or assistance with mortgage payments.

“This additional round of funding is a testament to Rhode Island Housing’s diligence in administering previous Hardest Hit funds, as well as the leadership and hard work of our federal delegation,” said Barbara Fields, Executive Director of Rhode Island Housing. “While our economy continues to recover, many homeowners are still struggling due to unemployment or underemployment, and the Hardest Hit program will bring real relief to those families.”

Today’s announcement also marks the grand opening of Rhode Island Housing’s HelpCenter office in Warwick. The new location, conveniently located just off Route 95 and with plenty of parking, will give greater accessibility for homeowners to the HelpCenter and the free, HUD-certified counseling services it provides for Rhode Islanders in danger of foreclosure.

About Rhode Island Housing

Together with its partners, Rhode Island Housing works to ensure that all people who live and work in Rhode Island can afford a healthy, attractive home that meets their needs. Rhode Island Housing uses its resources to provide low-interest loans, grants, education and assistance to help Rhode Islanders find, rent, buy, build and keep a good home. Created by the General Assembly in 1973, Rhode Island Housing is a privately funded public purpose corporation.