



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE DENNIS M. CANARIO *District 71*

Deputy Majority Leader

Committee on Judiciary

Committee on Health, Education and Welfare

December 11, 2014

Mr. Kevin M. Flynn
Associate Director of Planning
RI Division of Planning
One Capitol Hill
Providence RI 02908

Dear Director Flynn:

I am writing on behalf of my constituents in Tiverton, Portsmouth and Little Compton to express my objection to the adoption of RhodeMap RI. I have received copies of official Resolutions from the Town Councils of Tiverton and Portsmouth, which were submitted to the Division of Planning, also in opposition to RhodeMap RI.

I am asking that you place my opposition into the official record, as well as the following op-ed which I have submitted to local publications. I appreciate your consideration of my request.

RhodeMap RI: Of, by and for Rhode Islanders?

Rep. Dennis M. Canario

In a recently published opinion piece in defense of the RhodeMap RI plan that has come increasingly under attack, Neil Steinberg of the Rhode Island Foundation and Marcel Valois of Commerce RI said that “for over a decade, Rhode Islanders have called for an economic development vision, plan and most importantly action.”

I couldn't agree more. Rhode Island has been wallowing in the economic doldrums for much too long. Our state has resources, workers and the enthusiasm to kick itself back into fiscal health. All that has been lacking has been a unified, sensible plan that benefits every stakeholder in the state – every resident, every business and every community.

My concern with the RhodeMap RI: Building a Better Rhode Island plan is -- for whom, exactly, is this plan being built? And by whom? I understand our state's need to work cooperatively with other states in our region on such vital issues as energy and the environment. But I feel that the plan that has been put forward puts more emphasis on the opinions of individuals and businesses from out of state (who may have their own self interests) than on Rhode Islanders -- residents, business owners, community leaders who know what should be done, who know what can be done and who are committed to helping Rhode Islanders, first and foremost.

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I am also concerned that the federal Housing and Urban Development agency (HUD) plays such a major role in this plan. Notwithstanding our state's need to address our housing problems (of which there are several), I worry that we will grovel before this federal behemoth solely in the interest of funding, rather than draw up and execute a plan that makes sense for our little state. HUD has been around for a long time and may have accomplished good things, but a one-size-fits-all federal policy is not necessarily what Rhode Island needs.

Finally, I believe the plan may be in direct conflict with Article 13 of the Rhode Island Constitution, which assures that cities and towns have the right to govern themselves. Carrying out certain aspects of the proposed RhodeMap RI may go beyond a cooperative effort between the state and municipalities by imposing actions on communities.

Through the plan, according to the RhodeMap RI web site, "the state seeks to strengthen our economy, meet current and future housing needs and plan for future growth." All laudable, worthwhile and necessary goals. In fairness, the plan makes a number of good suggestions. But if we are going to succeed, if we are going to bring Rhode Island back to something approaching economic greatness, we need to do it in a way that it doesn't conflict with our state's constitution.

Rhode Island desperately needs to address certain issues if we hope to move our economy forward – issues such as our tax burden, our skilled worker gap, our incentives for attracting and growing business, our infrastructure. Before we rush to action on the RhodeMap RI plan, let's put together a more comprehensive, thorough action plan that all stakeholders in Rhode Island can buy into. We have been waiting for "over a decade." It won't hurt to wait a little longer and get it right.

Sincerely,



Dennis M. Canario
State Representative
District 71
Portsmouth-Little Compton-Tiverton

