

To: Representative Abney, Chair, and members of the House Finance Committee
Re: Support for the EOH Budget for FY2026 & 2027
From: Bernie Beaudreau, community volunteer, Rumford, RI
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Rhode Island Executive Office of Housing's Revised 2026 budget and Recommended 2027 Budget. I am, however, concerned that against the growing need for shelter and services of our state's homeless population, that the current shelter system does not have the capacity to prevent unsheltered homeless living on the street or in the woods, encamped or in doorways and dangerously exposed to the weather.

On behalf of our state's growing homeless population, I respectfully request that the House Finance Committee approve of an additional \$2.5million to EOH's fiscal year 2027 recommendation to partially fund and augment the following program initiatives:

- Funding of winter emergency shelters to be year-round
- Supplemental funds for implementing S-2264 and H-7987 Warming and Cooling Centers
- Master Leasing Program – managing shared apartments for the homeless
- Funding of the Homelessness Employment Program S-2621

The Master Leasing Program is an idea that is working in other states and should be promoted here in Rhode Island as well. Open Doors, one of Rhode Island's major shelter providers, estimates that a grant of \$100,000 could house—in shared apartments--about 70 (stable) homeless people, utilizing the grant funds to cover staff, administration, damages, clean-up, loss of rent and furniture. These tenants would be referred from Open Doors shelter beds, making room for 70 more less stable homeless. Other major shelter providers could access this program. Given the slow pace of new construction of apartments, Master Leasing could better utilize the existing housing stock, bringing more affordable apartments into the market sooner.

Michelle Wilcox, President and CEO of Crossroads, testified recently to the House Commission of Housing Affordability on March 12, 2026: *“Unfortunately, the need for our programs and services has never been greater... Homelessness has reach record levels, essentially doubling over the past five years... Rapidly escalating rents, a shortage of affordable housing, and wages that have not kept pace with inflation have caused more and more people to fall into homelessness, including people who are working one and two jobs in some cases and people who have never experienced homelessness before...”*

The RI Executive Office of Housing needs supplemental funding to implement new initiatives to be better able to address the growing homelessness problem.