



February 26, 2025

Representative Stephen M. Casey, Chair

House Municipal Government & Housing

Rhode Island State House

Providence RI, 02903

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H 5100, AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH & SAFETY - STATE
BUILDING CODE - ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT**

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we express our support for House Bill 5100, which is essential for ensuring that every Rhode Islander has access to safe and affordable housing. Through the LIFT UNITED initiative of our LIVE UNITED 2025 Strategic Plan, we are committed to dismantling the barriers that impede equitable access to secure, quality homes. We believe that stable housing is a fundamental human right and the cornerstone of economic security, healthy communities, and long-term prosperity for historically marginalized populations.

House Bill 5100 represents an opportunity to transform our housing landscape by authorizing the rapid deployment of SAVE Units—emergency shelter units that provide immediate housing solutions for individuals experiencing homelessness. With the reduction of federal rental assistance funding, the need for these adaptable shelter options has become increasingly urgent. According to a January 9, 2025 Providence Journal article, in 2024 there were at least 2,442 unhoused individuals in Rhode Island—a 35% increase from the previous year, with the actual number likely higher due to undercounting (Providence Journal, 2025). Furthermore, HUD's Point in Time Count reports that the population experiencing homelessness in Rhode Island increased by 39% from 2023 to 2024 (HUD, 2024).

Housing is the foundation upon which families build their futures. By supporting House Bill 5100, Rhode Island can make significant strides toward creating a state where every individual has the opportunity to live in a safe, affordable home. This investment in housing stability will reduce long-term reliance on emergency assistance, strengthen our local economy, and promote a more just and equitable society. We urge you to support this measure and join us in our commitment to creating a Rhode Island where secure housing is within reach for all.

Sincerely,

Peggy Desjarlais

Housing and Economic Policy

Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.

