

To: Representative Stephen M. Casey, Chair, and members of the
House Municipal Government and Housing Committee Members
From: Bernie Beaudreau, Community Volunteer, unaffiliated - Rumford, RI
Date: February 11, 2026
Re: **Support for H-7044 Homeless Bill of Rights (For)**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 7044 which augments the Homeless Bill of Rights by creating an eleven-member advisory committee to draft regulations for homeless shelters. I'd like to thank Representatives Lombardi, Hull, Tanzi, Ajello, Sanchez, Cruz, Potter, Stewart, Alzate, and Felix for introducing this important bill. My testimony is informed by my lifetime career in human services and specifically my volunteer work with the homeless over the past 14 months.

In recent weeks I have visited and volunteered at shelters, day services and encamped homeless where I have provided heating fuel for surviving the deep freeze of this winter. I have written about these experiences and shared them with the members of our state legislature and general public in hopes that I could increase awareness and connect you personally with the daily struggles and suffering of so many people. I can tell you with certainty that any and all provisions for our homeless population is greatly needed, including those provided by this bill H-7044.

The bill has two parts (a) and (b) under Section 34-37.1-7. **Homeless shelter standard** that I would to address.

Under part (a) **Findings**, may I suggest an additional finding: ***(18) That all shelters provide a suitable resting/sleeping area to include beds or cots to sleep on, and not require guests to sit up all night in chairs at tables. The sleeping area should be maintained daily to be sanitary and free of pests and infestation.***

Under part (b) I suggest that the wording be changed to reference the new **Rhode Island Advisory Council of Housing and Homelessness (ACHH)** established with the passage of the 2026 Budget, which included the restructuring of community input to the Executive Office of Housing (EOC). I also suggest that the proposed committee be referenced as the **Homeless Services Sub-Committee** of the ACHH.

The main benefit the Sub-Committee will provide to the ACHH and the EOH will be its focus on creating solutions to the present challenges of sheltering and provision of supportive services to meet the diverse needs of the homeless population. The composition of the EOH's ACHH rightly connects the homeless crisis with the wider issue of the general shortage of affordable housing, including housing for the homeless. **But the wider scope and lower frequency of Council's meetings will not put enough**

immediate and focused effort to address the current homelessness crisis in the state.

The range of issues and diversity of needs of the homeless population goes beyond the supplying of housing. Without addressing the physical and behavioral health as well as the occupational and employment needs of homeless people, any rehousing solutions for the homeless will likely be unsuccessful.

The composition of the proposed **Homeless Services Sub-Committee** under H-7044 would include a wide range of service providers, homeless advocacy groups and people who have experienced homelessness. The frequency and focus of the work of this committee would help guide the deliberations of EOH's ACHH and the EOH staff directly.

The work of the Sub-Committee will be focused and comprehensive, defining and recommending:

- basic operating standards for shelters
- access to shelter guidelines
- resident's rights and responsibilities
- program standards and the provision of essential services
- health and safety standards, and
- emergency winter shelter standards

The passage of this bill will facilitate the EOH's work to comprehensively address homelessness by embracing the guidance and experience of the homeless themselves and their service providers.