



Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness

225 Dyer Street, 4th Floor
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 213-5618 | info@rihomeless.org
rihomeless.org | [@rihomeless](https://www.instagram.com/rihomeless)

March 5, 2026

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey
Chair, House Municipal Government and Housing Committee
State House, Room 306
82 Smith Street,
Providence, RI 02903

Chair Casey and Members of the House Municipal Government and Housing Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the 2026 Housing Legislative Package, including House Bills H-8000 and H-8001. On behalf of the Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness, we appreciate this body's continued leadership in confronting Rhode Island's housing affordability and stability crisis.

Rhode Island faces a severe housing shortage. Rents remain elevated. Housing instability is rising. These pressures are directly connected to increases in homelessness and to growing strain on emergency systems, healthcare, and public resources.

Addressing this crisis requires both long-term structural solutions and coordinated, humane responses to immediate need.

The broader legislative package advances important reforms that increase housing production and reduce unnecessary regulatory barriers - including infill development where infrastructure already exists, modernization of parking requirements that drive up costs, and adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized properties. Expanding supply is essential to reducing upward pressure on rents and preventing housing loss.

At the same time, House Bills H-8000 and H-8001 address the current realities facing unsheltered Rhode Islanders and the communities responding to them.

H-8000 strengthens Rhode Island's Homeless Bill of Rights by requiring advance written notice - at least 15 days - prior to the removal or relocation of encampments on public property, except in clearly defined urgent circumstances. This bill does not prevent action; it ensures coordination. Advance notice allows outreach teams to engage individuals, assess health and safety needs, connect people to shelter or services, and coordinate thoughtfully with municipalities before displacement occurs.

H-8001 complements this approach by strengthening tools available to municipalities and state agencies to respond responsibly and flexibly to homelessness-related emergencies. Together, these bills recognize that unsheltered homelessness is both a humanitarian issue and a systems challenge that requires structure, coordination, and clear guidance.

Without thoughtful procedures, encampment removals can scatter individuals into more unsafe and hidden locations, disrupt service connections, and increase instability – outcomes that undermine public health and public safety. Structured notice and coordinated response create better outcomes for individuals and communities alike.

Encampments are not the root cause; they are a visible symptom of housing scarcity and economic pressure. Addressing them requires both increased housing production and policies grounded in dignity, public health, and system coordination.

Housing instability affects working families, seniors on fixed incomes, individuals exiting institutions, and those one unexpected event away from losing their homes. Effective housing policy must address the full continuum - from production and preservation to prevention and humane response.

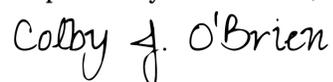
Stable housing improves public health outcomes, reduces reliance on crisis systems, strengthens workforce participation, and lowers long-term public expenditures. It remains one of the most effective tools available to strengthen both our communities and our economy.

RICEH supports this legislative package because it advances practical, data-informed solutions that expand housing opportunity while ensuring coordinated, humane responses for Rhode Islanders experiencing homelessness.

We stand ready to provide system data, stakeholder insight, and implementation support as this legislation moves forward.

Thank you for your leadership and your continued commitment to expanding access to safe, stable, and affordable housing across Rhode Island.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colby J. O'Brien". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Colby J. O'Brien
Executive Director
Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness

Audit trail

Details

FILE NAME Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness Housing Bills Written Final - 3/5/26, 12:23 PM

STATUS ● Signed

STATUS TIMESTAMP 2026/03/05
17:25:13 UTC

Activity



SENT

colby@rihomeless.org **sent** a signature request to:
• Colby J. O'Brien (colby@rihomeless.org)

2026/03/05
17:23:29 UTC



SIGNED

Signed by Colby J. O'Brien (colby@rihomeless.org)

2026/03/05
17:25:13 UTC



COMPLETED

This document has been signed by all signers and is **complete**

2026/03/05
17:25:13 UTC

The email address indicated above for each signer may be associated with a Google account, and may either be the primary email address or secondary email address associated with that account.