

To: Representative Stephen Casey, Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
From: Kady Johnson, Providence resident
Re: H8000 Homeless Bill of Rights regarding Encampments
Date: March 5, 2026

Thank you, Representative Casey and Members of the Committee for this opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 8000 as it is currently written.

My name is Kady. I am 45 years old and am here with my husband, Michael.

We are currently homeless and live in a tent at the end of a street in the south side of Providence. Except for a few days during last week's blizzard when we stayed with a family member, we have been surviving in our tent through this bitter cold winter.

We've never been this cold for so many days. Thankfully, we have had the support of a volunteer group who has delivered fuel for our tent heater every week.

Michael and I have been in this spot since mid-January, after being evicted from the Hospital Street encampment on January 14. On Tuesday, January 13, we were given less than a 12-hour notice to vacate by the next morning. The notice was dated September 15, 2025, long before our arrival to the site. The city claimed we had plenty of notice.

For Michael and I, it was about the sixth time we have been moved, from one homeless sheltering situation to another over the past three years.

We first became homeless in March, 2023 after being in our apartment since 2017. My husband and I had built a very successful hand-made jewelry business and were making money, had good credit and were doing well. Unfortunately, I became very ill and, sadly, I had three miscarriages in about thirteen months. I didn't know at the time that I had lead poisoning. I became very depressed and very erratic emotionally, which I have learned can be a result of lead poisoning.

Also, along the way, we faced the challenges of substance abuse and recovery. I needed and thankfully received mental health services.

Our absentee landlord who lived in California was in the process of renovating his decrepit apartments, ours was included but last on the list. We became very concerned

about the peeling paint in apartment and worried that we might have lead poisoning. We bought a test kit which confirmed our suspicion. Mike, concerned for our health, mentioned it to the landlord. The landlord's response was to discontinue our lease and evicted us.

We still had our business at the time and some savings and lived in a motel for eight months, which burned through our cash pretty quickly. The business slowed with our housing disruption, and we soon didn't have enough income to rent an apartment. The rents for a decent apartment have increased dramatically in the past few years.

We started living in our car around September of 2024. We couldn't keep up with running our jewelry business with no home base. We started doing deliveries for Amazon, DoorDash and other businesses to make some money but it was not enough. We sold our car and used some of the money to get a storage unit to live in. The storage facility manager was very empathetic and supportive but soon the corporate headquarters found out and we had to leave.

It was January of last year, very cold, though not as cold as this year. We got a tent and set up near a Dunkin Donuts. We were there for a few months but a business owner down the street complained to police who came by and told us we had to leave.

Soon after that, Mike and I left for a couple of days to visit family and when we returned, our tent and everything in it was gone. All we owned -- our identification documents, medications, clothes, everything was gone. The police didn't have our belongings.

We were told the angry business owner down the street trashed our tent and belongings. We called the police and they said there was nothing they could do.

That was last March, a year ago.

We got another tent and went to a well-hidden patch of scrub brush across from the radio station. We stayed there a while until the police came by and issued a no-trespassing notice and told us we had to move, which we agreed to do.

I soon became very sick with a serious virus and was sent to RI Hospital where we stayed for week. Mike stayed with me. When I was released from the hospital we returned to our tent site and everything was taken, gone, once again.

Every few months we have been pending large sums of money for tents, sleeping bags and other gear for living outside in any weather.

By then it was July and we bounced around the city sleeping in park benches, on sidewalks, in doorways. We eventually ended up setting another tent off Hospital Street, with tenting neighbors on a triangle of lawn abutting the highway, out of site. As I mentioned earlier, we were evicted from that site January 14.

We feel lucky to have found the camping spot where we are now. When we were getting set up a resident from the neighborhood greeted us, welcoming us to the neighborhood. That was very reassuring that neighbors would be kind to us.

I am here tonight because I want you, our state's legislature, to know that as I read the H8000 bill regarding encampment clearings, there is little or no protection for us, the homeless who have managed tent living as a last resort.

What are we to do? Where are we to go?

Every move we make is insecure and unstable. Wherever we land we are eventually evicted and robbed of our belongings. With no long-term housing solution available to us, we must live outside, challenged to manage life with no running water, no electricity, no sanitary facilities, no kitchen, no laundry, no trash collection. We seek resources in walking distance to remain clean and healthy.

We sporadically have staff from helping agencies visit with us but nobody has been able to help us find shelter where my husband and I, and our tiny service dog, can be together. There are no apartments safe to live in at a rental rate that we can afford.

We're not looking for a hand out but just a hand up. We soon hope to be back in business but we need to have a place to live. Can you help us with that?