



*Distinctive Communities
Powerful Alliance*

March 5, 2026

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey, Chair
House Municipal Government and Housing
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: HOUSE BILL 8000 – AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY -- HOMELESS BILL OF RIGHTS

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we are supportive of this proposal, which would amend Rhode Island's existing Homeless Bill of Rights to require advance written notice prior to the forcible removal or relocation of an encampment on public property, subject to clearly defined emergency and safety exceptions. We also recommend incorporating feedback from our cities and towns as the bill moves through the legislative process to ensure it reflects local needs and addresses practical considerations on the ground for our members.

Municipalities across Rhode Island are on the front lines of addressing homelessness. Local officials, first responders, and outreach providers work every day to balance compassion for vulnerable residents with public health, safety, and infrastructure responsibilities. House Bill 8000 provides an important framework that supports coordination, predictability, and transparency in those efforts.

Providing advance written notice and ensuring that local homelessness outreach agencies receive a copy of that notice can promote better outcomes for impacted individuals and families. Advance notice allows service providers the opportunity to engage with encampment residents, connect them to shelter, housing navigation, health care, and other critical services, and reduce the risk of further destabilization. This approach encourages a more orderly and humane process, while maintaining necessary flexibility for municipalities to act swiftly when there are immediate safety or public health concerns. As implementation is considered, it may also be helpful to review whether a slightly shorter notice period, such as ten (10) days, could achieve these goals while continuing to provide municipalities with reasonable operational flexibility.

Importantly, the bill's enumerated exceptions appropriately recognize that cities and towns must retain the ability to respond without delay when encampments are located within state or federal rights-of-way posing immediate safety risks, near active construction sites, interfering with infrastructure repairs or inspections, situated in environmentally hazardous areas, or otherwise presenting urgent public safety or health concerns. As with many policies of this nature, municipalities would benefit from continued discussion around the application of emergency circumstances to ensure the language provides clear and workable guidance for those responsible for carrying it out at the local level.

While the League is supportive of the overall intent of the legislation, there are several areas where additional clarification may be beneficial as the bill advances. The bill currently provides that it would take effect upon passage. Municipalities may benefit from a brief implementation period to allow for the development of policies,

training of staff, and coordination with outreach partners. Without such a transition period, cities and towns could face challenges in aligning procedures with the new requirements.

Additionally, the proposed notice requirement may benefit from further clarification regarding how the notice period applies in practice. Encampments can often be transient or fluid in nature, with individuals entering or leaving a site on a regular basis or with locations being reoccupied after a notice is issued. Clarification around how the notice period is triggered, for example, whether the timeframe begins upon the posting of a notice at the site, may help ensure consistent application of the requirement while still meeting the bill's objectives.

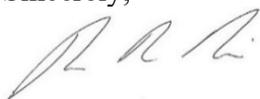
The League also notes that certain terms within the bill, such as "temporary shelter," "public spaces," and areas "not meant for human habitation," may benefit from additional definition to provide clear guidance to municipal officials responsible for implementation. Similarly, further discussion may be warranted regarding how the bill interacts with existing municipal and state regulations, such as posted hours of operation in public parks administered by municipalities or the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, and situations where an encampment may block ingress or egress to a private business or other critical access points.

The League appreciates that House Bill 8000 seeks to strike a balance between protecting the rights and dignity of individuals experiencing homelessness and preserving municipal authority to safeguard public spaces and infrastructure.

As this legislation is part of the Speaker's broader housing package, we also look forward to reviewing House Bill 8000 in conjunction with the other measures included in that package with our member municipalities. We remain committed to working collaboratively with the Rhode Island General Assembly, stakeholders, and our local officials to ensure that the various components operate in strong synergy and reflect practical, workable standards for cities and towns. We look forward to keeping the dialogue open as the legislation advances and to working together on any refinements that may further improve practical application at the local level.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the perspective of Rhode Island's municipalities and for your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Municipal Government and Housing