

To: Representative Stephen Casey, Chair, and Members of the House
Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
From: Bernie Beaudreau, community volunteer, Rumford RI 401-440-4165
email: bernardjbeaudreau@gmail.com
Re: Support for H8001 - SAFE Units Fire and Building Codes & Regulations
Date: March 5, 2026

I understand that the passage of H8001 will facilitate the construction of more SAFE (Support and Functional Emergency) units, such as the pallet shelters employed at Echo Village. As such, I enthusiastically lend my support. The following sections of the bill stand out for me:

SECTION 1. Chapter 23-27.3 of the General Laws entitled "State Building Code" is hereby amended

45-24-31. Definitions

(67) Supportive and functional emergency units ("SAFE Units"). A structure intended for temporary and transitional residential occupancy which complies with § 23-27.3-101.5. A SAFE Unit is intended to provide temporary safety and privacy for people experiencing homelessness and to enable occupants to transition to permanent housing.

45-24-78. Limited emergency authority.

(e) Nothing contained in this chapter shall prevent a municipality from allowing, on a non-emergency basis, SAFE Units, provided the units comply with all applicable state building and fire code sections by right through the passage of a zoning ordinance amendment in accordance with the provisions of §§ 45-24-50 through 45-24-53 and are permitted pursuant to § 23-27.3-101.5.

As we all know, our state is in an affordable housing crisis. There are not enough affordable housing units for our low-income population. For the 2,200 homeless individuals, over 600 of whom are living outside, there aren't enough shelter beds, transitional housing units, or permanently supported housing. The Governor's 2030 Housing plan has production goals that represent about a tenth of the total need.

This legislation, as it is carefully constructed, promises to open up fire and zoning codes and regulations to enable an effective sheltering model which has been proven with Echo Village. When implemented wisely and at scale, with the support of local municipalities, these proposed regulations will facilitate the expansion of these sheltering units at a fraction of the Echo Village original costs.