

Dawn Huntley

From: Marianne Kelly <mkelly5915@ymail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 5, 2026 1:15 PM
To: House Municipal Government and Housing Committee
Subject: House Bill No. 8001--ENTITLED, An Act Relating to Health and Safety -- State Building Code -- Administration and Enforcement

RE: House Bill No. 8001 ENTITLED, An Act Relating to Health and Safety -- State Building Code -- Administration and Enforcement

Dear Chairman Casey and Members of the House Municipal Government and Housing Committee,

As a Rhode Island resident who cares deeply about the well-being of the people in our communities—especially older adults and families—I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill No. 8001, which would allow municipalities to declare limited emergencies and authorize the temporary use of SAFE Units to provide shelter for people experiencing homelessness.

For many Rhode Islanders, homelessness is no longer a distant issue — it is becoming a reality for neighbors, friends, and increasingly, older adults. According to AARP estimates, between 2023 and 2027, more than 800 Rhode Islanders age 65 and older may face eviction, and more than 300 older Rhode Islanders may experience homelessness.

Older adults face unique and serious risks when they lose stable housing. They are far more vulnerable to illness, injury, and exposure to extreme weather than younger individuals. For someone in their 60s or 70s, spending nights outside, in a car, or in unsafe conditions can quickly become life-threatening.

This is not just a national issue — it is happening here in Rhode Island. Crossroads Rhode Island reported a 33 percent increase in seniors over the age of 65 experiencing homelessness in 2023. Nationally, more than 238,000 Americans age 55 and older experienced homelessness in 2023, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that older adults are the fastest-growing age group experiencing homelessness.

House Bill No. 8001 provides municipalities with a practical and humane tool to respond to housing emergencies. SAFE Units can provide immediate shelter, safety, and dignity while longer-term housing solutions are developed. In moments of crisis, communities need flexible options to protect their residents.

No older Rhode Islander who has worked, contributed, and built a life in our communities should have to face the dangers of homelessness without shelter or support. This bill helps ensure that municipalities can respond quickly when people need help the most.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support House Bill No. 8001. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marianne Kelly
Johnston, RI