



Testimony of Matt Netto, AARP Rhode Island
In support of House Bill 8001
House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
March 4, 2026

Chairman Casey and Members of the House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing:

AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization with 38 million members nationwide and nearly 125,000 members here in Rhode Island. We advocate on behalf of issues that impact older adults, and we appreciate the opportunity to offer our support for authorizing municipalities to make an emergency declaration under limited circumstances to allow for the construction and use of Supportive and Versatile Emergency units on a temporary basis as outlined in Speaker Shekarchi's House Bill 8001.

According to a 2023 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services report, older adults are the fastest-growing age group of those experiencing homelessness. In fact, Crossroads Rhode Island reported that the percentage of older Rhode Islanders, 65 +, experiencing homelessness increased by 33 percent in 2023. Older adults experiencing homelessness may not be as resilient as younger people in the same situation. Older adults are less likely than younger people to survive exposure to the severe weather conditions people who are homeless must endure. They are also frequently exposed to unsafe and unsanitary conditions. This can exacerbate health problems that often accompany aging.

An analysis of Census Bureau data conducted by AARP and Statista estimates that between 2023 and 2027 over 800 older Rhode Islanders (65+) will face eviction. In addition, the 2023 AARP Long Term Services and Supports Scorecard ranked Rhode Island dead last in the country for the availability of housing for older adults. AARP Rhode Island fears that this trend of homeless older adults will only increase in the years to come.

The analysis conducted by AARP and Statista also estimated that between 2023 and 2027 a total of 300 older Rhode Islanders will experience homelessness. The problem of older adults experiencing homelessness is growing and measures must be taken to ensure that these individuals are sheltered in their time of need. For these reasons AARP Rhode Island strongly supports House Bill 8001 and asks that the committee recommend passage.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Netto".

Matt Netto

Associate State Director, AARP Rhode Island