



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 8001 – AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- STATE BUILDING CODE --
ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT

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 enable cities and towns to authorize the temporary use of Supportive and Functional Emergency units (“SAFE Units,” such as pallet shelters) during a declaration of an emergency. This legislation provides municipalities with the tools to respond quickly and effectively in the event of severe weather or other natural or man-made disasters. 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.

This bill appropriately balances the urgent need for emergency housing solutions with municipal oversight, ensuring that cities and towns can act swiftly while maintaining local control. The League is particularly grateful for the enabling nature of this legislation, which aligns with our priorities of allowing municipalities to address local needs in a way that best suits their unique communities.

By providing exemptions from certain state fire and building codes specific to SAFE Units, House Bill 8001 acknowledges the necessity of a rapid response framework while maintaining accountability through reporting to the Governor, the Speaker of the House, and the President of the Senate. These reporting provisions will ensure transparency regarding the deployment of SAFE Units and the populations they serve.

We also welcome input from subject matter experts, especially municipal Building Departments, to ensure that the implementation of SAFE Units is both effective and structurally sound. Addressing emergency housing needs requires a thoughtful and collaborative approach, and House Bill 8001 represents an important step toward enhancing municipalities’ ability to serve their residents in times of crisis.

As this legislation is part of the Speaker’s broader housing package, we also look forward to reviewing House Bill 8001 in conjunction with the other measures included in that package with our member municipalities. We remain committed to working collaboratively with the 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Rossi', written in a cursive style.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Municipal Government and Housing