



Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness

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The Honorable Evan P. Shanley  
Chair, House State Government & Elections Committee  
82 Smith Street, Room 135  
Providence, RI 02903

Support for H7987 – Warming & Cooling Center Emergency Action Plans

Dear Chair Shanley and Members of the House State Government & Elections Committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness, I write in strong support of House Bill H7987, which establishes a coordinated, statewide framework for warming and cooling center emergency action plans.

As extreme weather events become more frequent and severe, the need for a clear, coordinated response system is no longer optional—it is essential. H7987 takes an important step forward by requiring municipalities to develop formal emergency action plans, ensuring that residents—especially those experiencing homelessness and housing instability—have safe, accessible places to go during life-threatening weather conditions.

This legislation recognizes what providers across our system experience every day: that survival during extreme heat and cold depends on coordination, communication, and preparedness. By requiring municipalities to identify locations, establish communication protocols, and coordinate with nonprofit partners, this bill strengthens the existing safety net and reduces reliance on fragmented, last-minute responses.

Importantly, H7987 also establishes a statewide notification system in coordination with the National Weather Service. This ensures that alerts are timely, consistent, and actionable—helping providers, municipalities, and residents respond quickly when conditions become dangerous.

From a systems perspective, this bill aligns with best practices in emergency management and homelessness response:

- It formalizes partnerships between municipalities, state agencies, and community-based providers
- It improves access to critical information for vulnerable populations

- It ensures consistency in how warming and cooling centers are activated and operated statewide
- It supports dignity and safety by ensuring access to basic needs such as shelter, hydration, and rest during emergencies

For individuals experiencing homelessness, extreme weather is not an inconvenience—it is a direct threat to health and life. Too often, access to warming and cooling centers depends on informal networks or inconsistent local practices. H7987 moves Rhode Island toward a more equitable, reliable, and humane system.

We strongly urge the Committee to support passage of H7987 and continue advancing policies that protect our most vulnerable neighbors.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to public safety and housing stability.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Colby J. O'Brien".

Colby J. O'Brien  
Executive Director  
Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness