



Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness

225 Dyer Street, 4th Floor
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 213-5618 | info@rihomeless.org
rihomeless.org | @rihomeless

March 25, 2026

The Honorable Jacob Bissaillon
Chair, Senate Housing and Municipal Government Committee
82 Smith Street, Room 212
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Bissaillon and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness, I write in strong support of Senate Bill S2264, which establishes a framework for coordinated municipal response during extreme heat and cold events, including the activation of warming and cooling centers.

S2264 represents a critical and timely step in strengthening Rhode Island's response to climate-driven emergencies that disproportionately impact people experiencing homelessness and housing instability. This legislation ensures that when extreme weather alerts are issued, municipalities follow clear procedures to connect residents with life-saving resources, including access to safe, accessible warming and cooling centers.

For individuals and families without stable housing, extreme weather is not an inconvenience - it is a direct threat to health and survival. On nights of extreme cold or during periods of dangerous heat, the difference between access to a safe indoor space and exposure can be life-altering or fatal. Across Rhode Island, we continue to see the impact of extreme weather on vulnerable populations, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, and those living unsheltered.

This bill addresses a longstanding gap in consistency and coordination. While many communities already work diligently to open warming or cooling centers, practices vary widely, and access is not always predictable or well-communicated. S2264 helps standardize expectations across municipalities, ensuring that residents - regardless of where they live - have access to timely information and safe refuge during extreme weather events.

Importantly, this legislation also supports frontline providers, outreach teams, and municipalities by creating a clearer structure for response. A coordinated system allows service providers to better plan, communicate, and mobilize resources, ultimately improving outcomes and reducing strain on emergency systems.

At its core, S2264 is about dignity, safety, and prevention. It recognizes that no Rhode Islander should be left without options during dangerous weather conditions and that proactive, coordinated responses save lives.

We respectfully urge the Committee to pass Senate Bill S2264 and continue advancing policies that protect our most vulnerable neighbors.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued leadership on housing and homelessness.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colby J. O'Brien". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light gray rectangular background.

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