



Mathewson Street United Methodist Church
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Honorable members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

This letter is in support of House Bill H7967 – Homeless Bill of Rights. I am the director of Mathewson Street UMC in Providence and for the past nine years I have been a member of this community. We are an open door to everyone no matter where you are on your journey. Many of the individuals that come through our doors are currently experiencing homelessness.

The obstacles that people face who are unsheltered are tremendous. We should be doing everything we can, whether it's elected officials, law enforcement, churches, community members to support those who are going through this crisis.

Unfortunately, I have witnessed many of our unsheltered friends in encampments and even in downtown Providence being treated in a way that is not acceptable. If you were to ask any of these individuals if they had a choice to sleep outside or in a warm bed, we know the answer would be the latter. In order to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone across our state we should adopt these changes to the bill. Everyone should have privacy in his or her property to the same extent as personal property in a permanent residence. Everyone should be given sixty days' notice before any action to relocate is put in place. This will allow time for outreach workers to collaborate with law enforcement, public works departments to make sure an alternative relocation option is put in place.

The rising cost of rents, the lack of shelter beds across the state has made it incredibly difficult for many to find a safe space each night. Until we find a way to provide this basic human right to everyone across the state, housing, then there needs to be some accountability for the way we treat individuals who are unsheltered. It is my hope that updating this bill will ensure that we start standing by individuals in crisis. Thank you in advance for your consideration in addressing this important issue in our state.

Warm Regards,

Kevin Simon
Director of Outreach and Communications
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