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March 26, 2024

The Honorable Robert E. Craven Sr., Chairperson
House Judiciary Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: 2024- H 7967, AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY - HOMELESS BILL OF RIGHTS

Dear Chairperson Craven:

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) respectfully submits this letter of concern regarding 2024- H 7967, AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY- HOMELESS BILL OF RIGHTS.

RIDOT works in partnership with Department of Housing and the cities and towns to address encampments, on RIDOT-owned properties, in the safest and most humane method we can. We do not enter an encampment until we are informed that occupants have been offered outreach and are no longer on the property. Only then does RIDOT Maintenance schedule the HazMat cleaning, fencing and signage, if needed.

This bill extends the period of Notice to Vacate to 60 days. Occasionally, it is necessary for RIDOT to take immediate action when occupants on a state or federal right-of-way are in an immediate unsafe health or infrastructure concern. In general, there are circumstances that warrant faster response. Some examples are: the delay of an active project, bridge repairs, bridge inspections, bridge cleaning/maintenance, floods, fire, vandalism, collision damage, lead paint, pigeon guano, deterioration of a structure, utilizing confined spaces for shelter, environmental hazards created by encampments affecting personnel, encampments encroaching upon public ways, encampments prohibiting emergency access or DOT access, hazards to encampments from underground utilities, encampments using flammables under the bridge.

It is for these reasons that RIDOT submits this letter regarding 2024 - H 7967. We thank you for your consideration of our concerns. We are available to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Peter Alviti, Jr., P.E.

Director, Rhode Island Department of Transportation

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee
The Honorable Jennifer A. Stewart
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel