



February 4, 2025

House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
Rhode Island State House

Re: **Testimony SUPPORTING House Bill 5100,**

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of House Bill 5100, a bill that will make it easier for municipalities to create shelters for the homeless in times of need.

Homelessness among older adults is a growing crisis in Rhode Island and across the country. According to AARP, between 2023 and 2027, over 800 older Rhode Islanders (65+) will face eviction, and more than 300 will experience homelessness. These numbers are deeply concerning, as older adults are particularly vulnerable to the severe weather conditions that people without shelter must endure.

Nationally, the crisis is even more stark. AARP and Statista's analysis of Census Bureau data estimated that 238,083 Americans aged 55 and older experienced homelessness in 2023. Here in Rhode Island, Crossroads Rhode Island reported a 33% increase in homelessness among seniors over the age of 65 in 2023 alone. Further, a 2023 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services report found that older adults are the fastest-growing age group among those experiencing homelessness.

We must take decisive action to ensure that Rhode Island municipalities have the flexibility and support they need to create emergency shelters for those in crisis. HB 5100 provides a practical and compassionate solution by allowing local governments to respond swiftly to the urgent needs of their most vulnerable residents.

By passing HB 5100, this legislature will take a significant step toward protecting the health, safety, and dignity of older Rhode Islanders who are at risk of homelessness. I strongly urge this committee to vote in favor of this bill and help ensure that no senior in our state is left without shelter in their time of need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Gerard,
ABC-RI