



April 2, 2025

The Honorable Stephen Casey
Chair, House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
Rhode Island State House, 82 Smith Street, Providence RI 02903

Re: SUPPORT for H-5953

Dear Chair Casey and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI), I write in support of H-5953, which provides for warming and cooling center alerts to trigger certain procedures for municipalities during extreme temperatures to help at-risk individuals with resources.

HNRI is the state's association of 18 nonprofit community development organizations, who are committed to serving low- and moderate-income households across Rhode Island. We are also the backbone organization for Homes RI, a statewide coalition of 80 organizations focused on increasing the supply of safe, healthy and affordable homes.

This winter, Rhode Island experienced multiple events of extreme cold, sadly, resulting in known deaths of individuals who did not have adequate shelter. The proposed legislation would help to reduce or eliminate deaths and serious health complications of extreme heat and cold exposure by creating a process for municipalities to develop and implement cooling and warming center alert plans during critical periods, as well as stipulations for how and when warming/cooling centers are to operate during declared emergency periods. As demonstrated by the crisis this winter and resulting public outcry, establishing protocols that can be reliably communicated and transmitted at all levels of government and to vulnerable individuals in need of relief from extreme temperatures is crucial to avoid not only human harm, but to establish predictability and emergency preparedness across the state. The planning, preparedness and establishment of safe cooling and warming centers can alleviate the burden on local emergency services and healthcare facilities by helping to prevent illnesses and emergencies associated with exposure to extreme temperatures, and ensuring there is a known place for residents to seek relief.

H-5953 helps to address the urgent needs of at-risk Rhode Islanders during extreme heat and cold, and improves the overall system of public safety and emergency preparedness statewide. I encourage the Committee to support this bill and to move it forward out of Committee. Please feel free to contact me at (401) 721-5680 ext. 104 or mlodge@housingnetworkri.org with any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melina Lodge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Melina" and last name "Lodge" clearly distinguishable.

Melina Lodge, Executive Director