

House Municipal Government & Housing Committee  
Rhode Island General Assembly  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairperson and Committee Members:

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 5953, which would establish requirements for warming and cooling centers during extreme weather conditions.

## Why This Legislation Matters

Rhode Island experiences both extreme cold and heat throughout the year, conditions that can be life-threatening for our most vulnerable residents, particularly those experiencing homelessness. As climate change intensifies weather patterns, these extreme conditions are becoming more frequent and severe. The proposed legislation addresses this critical public health and safety concern by establishing clear protocols that will save lives.

## Key Benefits of H5953

1. **Establishes Clear Activation Criteria:** The bill sets specific temperature thresholds for when warming centers (36°F or lower) and cooling centers (heat index of 95°F or higher for two consecutive days, or 100°F for any length of time) must be activated, eliminating ambiguity and ensuring consistent implementation.
2. **Ensures 24/7 Availability During Alerts:** By requiring centers to remain open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during declared alerts, the bill ensures that vulnerable individuals have continuous access to safe shelter during dangerous weather conditions.
3. **Coordinates Resources Effectively:** The legislation creates a coordinated system for alerts and information sharing across municipalities, social service agencies, and nonprofit organizations, maximizing existing resources and improving communication.
4. **Allows Regional Collaboration:** Smaller municipalities with fewer homeless residents can collaborate with neighboring communities to establish regional centers, making implementation more feasible and cost-effective.
5. **Provides Essential Services:** The bill requires that centers open for 24+ hours provide necessary provisions like blankets, cots, meals, and beverages, addressing basic human needs during weather emergencies.

## Why I Support This Bill

As a Rhode Island resident, I believe that protecting our most vulnerable community members during extreme weather events is not just a moral imperative but a reflection of our shared values as Rhode Islanders. This legislation will provide critical, potentially life-saving protection for people experiencing homelessness and others who may be particularly vulnerable to extreme temperatures.

The bill's approach is both compassionate and practical, setting clear standards while allowing for flexibility in implementation. By coordinating alerts and resources through existing emergency management infrastructure and United Way's 211 system, it leverages established systems rather than creating entirely new bureaucracies.

## **Conclusion**

I urge the committee to vote in favor of House Bill 5953. This legislation represents a crucial step forward in protecting vulnerable Rhode Islanders from extreme weather conditions. By establishing clear protocols for warming and cooling centers, we can prevent unnecessary suffering and potentially save lives during dangerous temperature extremes.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacey Levin  
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