

2 April 2025

To the Honorable Members of the Rhode Island House Committee on Judiciary,

My name is David Jesse Mathis, and I am on the Advocacy Team of Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere. As an advocate for the unhoused community, I write to you **in strong support of the proposed revisions to bill H5665**.

This act would update the homeless bill of rights to add rules governing the interaction with encampments and require a sixty (60) days' notice to vacate be provided to persons staying in an encampment on public property and require fines for non-compliance, require police and public works departments to adopt written policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the requirements of this chapter and include the right to access clean and sanitary conditions.

Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere is the one of the largest outreach providers in the state of Rhode Island, and has collaborated with community organizations such as Reclaim Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Homelessness Advocacy Project, and Direct Action for Rights and Equality. Through supporting and uplifting people experiencing homelessness, we have seen firsthand what these people are facing.

Whether it be discriminatory police harassment, arbitrary encampment clearings, or other inhumane treatment, people experiencing homelessness in Rhode Island have their fundamental rights violated every day. These rights are **enshrined into law** by the Homelessness Bill of Rights, yet are disrespected because there are no mechanisms of enforcement. This revision would add those mechanisms, ensuring that these rights which are already valued in principle are protected in practice.

We at Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere call on the Rhode Island House Committee on Judiciary to enforce the current homeless bill of rights to ensure that the rights of Rhode Island's homeless population are recognized and upheld by the law. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

David Jesse Mathis and the Advocacy Team of Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere