

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 bill H5953**.

This bill amends the Rhode Island Emergency Management law, requiring municipalities to create and implement Warming and Cooling Center Plans. The temperature for activating Warming Center Alerts will be 36 degrees (Fahrenheit) or lower, actual or wind chill temperature. Cooling Center Alerts will be activated when the weather forecast is for 95 to 99 degrees, actual or heat indexed, for two or more days, or 100 degrees or more for any length of time.

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.

Through our partnership with these organizations and our own outreach efforts, we have heard countless stories of individuals being left out in brutal temperatures, and general uncertainty around when emergency shelters are open or closed. Along with this, we have witnessed deaths of Rhode Island residents because of extreme weather conditions, with 54 recorded deaths during the 2023-2024 winter season, and the deaths of multiple people this previous winter season. Each of these people are not a number or statistic, but rather a person with their own dreams and loved ones. We cannot afford to let Rhode Islanders continue to die due to a lack of regulations around warming and cooling shelters. It is your duty as representatives of the State of Rhode Island to stop the preventable deaths of your constituents.

We at Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere call on the Rhode Island House Committee on Judiciary to create strong regulations which would save the lives of people who have the least resources. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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