Testimony in Support of HB5120
House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
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The Economic Progress Institute supports Representative Lombardi’s HB5120, which would establish a committee within the Rhode Island Housing Resources Commission to provide recommendations for homeless shelter standards. This committee will be comprised of individuals with lived experience, advocates, and providers. It would convene stakeholders who aim to eliminate homelessness in RI and provide resources to folks experiencing homelessness to set standards and regulations for homeless shelters. Rhode Island was the first state in the nation to pass a Homeless Bill of Rights in 2012, and HB5120 builds on the legislative intent of the Homeless Bill of Rights of ameliorating the adverse effects for individuals and communities when resident’s lack a home.

We applaud the inclusion on this committee of individuals who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness and individuals who are living in or who have lived in domestic violence shelters. It is important to recognize that while other individuals appointed to this committee are likely doing so as part of their professional employment, the individuals with lived experience of homelessness and shelters would likely be participating outside of professional work. Yet, we should recognize the expertise they bring to the table through their lived experience. We pay experts for their expertise. Therefore, unless state law automatically provides compensation to individuals serving on committees like this one, we recommend that a small stipend be set aside to compensate individuals with lived experience of homelessness for their time and contributions.