



State of Rhode Island

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

August 18, 2026

Deborah J. Goddard, Secretary
Rhode Island Department of Housing
Office of the Governor
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903
deborah.goddard@housing.ri.gov

Secretary Goddard,

We write to express our grave concern regarding the recent defunding of the Dignity Bus program, which has provided critical shelter for individuals in need across northern Rhode Island.

It has come to our attention that the Dignity Bus, with its capacity of 20 beds, has been defunded. This decision is nothing short of perplexing, especially considering the ongoing crisis faced by our communities, Woonsocket in particular. As you are fully aware, our region is grappling with a significant homelessness issue, and the Dignity Bus has served as a vital resource to keep individuals off the streets and provide them with a semblance of shelter.

We are requesting immediate correspondence from your office regarding the determination to defund this crucial program. It is particularly disheartening considering Governor McKee's very recently stated priorities, which emphasize the need for urgent action to address homelessness. The disconnect between the administration's proclaimed commitment to tackling this crisis and the actual actions being taken by your department is troubling.

Furthermore, we find it difficult to comprehend how, amidst an inflated FY 27 budget of \$15.2 billion, funding for the Dignity Bus program could not be allocated. This budget should be utilized to support essential services that directly impact on the wellbeing of our residents. To suggest that there are no available funds for such a critical initiative is not only hard to believe but unacceptable.

If this situation persists, we want to be clear: legislative action will be taken in January to ensure that northern Rhode Island does not continue to bear the burden of inaction on this pressing issue. We refuse to allow our constituents to suffer the consequences of a state government that appears to be disengaged from the realities faced by our communities.

Deborah J. Goddard, Secretary
Office of the Governor
Rhode Island Department of Housing
August 18, 2026
Page 2

Moreover, we are deeply concerned that the state is shifting the fiscal responsibility of addressing homelessness onto the city of Woonsocket. It is imperative to recognize that this is not solely a local issue; it is a statewide concern that demands a coordinated response. The state has mandated that all Rhode Island residents should have access to services in Woonsocket, yet it seems that the financial support to facilitate this is lacking. This ongoing burden is unsustainable and places undue strain on our city's already limited resources. Woonsocket is teetering on the edge of fiscal constraints, and it is unacceptable for the state to turn a blind eye to the ramifications of its policies.

In closing, we urge your office to reconsider this decision and provide clarity on the funding status of the Dignity Bus program. Our communities deserve better, and we expect your immediate attention to this critical matter. We look forward to your prompt response and hope to see a collaborative effort in restoring funding to ensure the safety and dignity of our residents.

Sincerely,

Senator Brian Thompson
Senator Melissa Murray
Representative Jon Brien
Representative Stephen Casey
Representative Robert Phillips