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March 13, 2024

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara Chair,
House Education Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 7726, RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

United Way of Rhode Island is writing to express its support for **House Bill 7726, An Act Relating to Education** and public-school closure. A priority of United Way of Rhode Island is to help children succeed in school through the support of high-quality education programs in early childhood, elementary, middle, secondary school and out-of-school time programs.

United Way RI advocates for House Bill 7726 and its commitment to transparency, community engagement, and meticulous planning in school closure, merger, or phase-out processes. This legislation champions comprehensive communication strategies and community engagement strategies to increase family civic engagement. Key legislative highlights include the following:

- Transparent communication about school changes.
- Comprehensive reports on school conditions and trends, in multiple languages.
- Contingency planning for smooth transitions for students, families, and staff.
- Community involvement through stakeholder meetings and a public forum.
- Decision-making timelines that incorporate community feedback, ensuring accountability.
- Community informed accountability in educational decision-making

House Bill 7726 underscores the belief that community civic engagement is vital to improving K-12 public relations in education and advancing family engagement. By fostering a collaborative decision-making process, it ensures that the interests of students, families, and educators are at the heart of educational changes. United Way of Rhode Island encourages the committee to pass House Bill 7726 to enhance our education system through responsible community engaged governance.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cortney Nicolato".

Cortney Nicolato
President and CEO

Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.

