



February 24, 2025

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

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL NO. 5165 – AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION–  
ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAMS**

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we express our support for House Bill 5165, which advances equitable access to high-quality education. Through the ACHIEVE UNITED initiative of our LIVE UNITED 2025 Strategic Plan, we are committed to ensuring that every child—regardless of background—has the resources, opportunities, and support they need to succeed from early childhood through post-secondary education.

House Bill 5165 is a critical step in addressing educational disparities by investing in targeted programs that enhance student learning, provide additional support for multilingual learners, and strengthen academic and workforce success pathways. Expanding access to equitable education ensures a brighter future for Rhode Island’s children and a stronger economy for our state.

Local educators, administrators, and school staff are the backbone of our learning communities. The establishment of school improvement teams under House Bill 5165 recognizes that those closest to our students—comprising dedicated local staff, faculty, and administrators—are uniquely positioned to make informed adjustments and timely amendments that directly enhance the learning environment. Empowering these local teams with decision-making authority not only fosters a culture of responsiveness and accountability but also ensures that every school can tailor its approach to meet its specific needs.

Innovation is essential in addressing the evolving demographic landscape of Rhode Island’s student population. As multilingual learners emerge as the fastest growing demographic in our state—an insight underscored by the latest RI KidsCount Factbook (RI KidsCount, 2025)—our educational policies must be adaptable and forward-thinking. House Bill 5165 provides a framework for local leaders to implement creative, culturally responsive strategies that support the academic success and lived experiences of all students. By championing locally driven, innovative solutions, we can better serve our diverse student body and ensure that every learner has the opportunity to thrive.

[Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.](#)

Investing in education is an investment in Rhode Island's future. House Bill 5165 will help ensure that all students—especially those in historically underserved communities—have the tools they need to thrive in school and beyond. By advancing equitable K-12 education policies, we can break cycles of poverty and create a pathway to long-term success for the next generation. We respectfully urge your support for this legislation to build a more just and prosperous Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean

Manager, Government Relations & Policy

United Way Rhode Island