



March 4, 2025

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara, Chair

House Committee on Education

Rhode Island State House

Providence, RI 02903

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL NUMBER 5338 – AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION –  
HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS**

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we express our support for Bill Number 5338, 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.

Bill Number 5338 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.

In addition, research underscores the importance of robust school-based mental health support in fostering youth wellness and implementing trauma-informed care. A recent publication by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2022) demonstrates that schools maintaining a ratio of one certified school psychologist per 500 students report significant improvements in student behavioral health, reduced disciplinary incidents, and enhanced academic outcomes. This study calls for increased investment in mental health professionals, including social workers and school psychologists, to effectively address the comprehensive needs of students. By requiring each school system to employ at least one certified school psychologist per 500 students, Bill Number 5338 ensures that our schools are better equipped to support the emotional and behavioral well-being of all students, thereby creating safer and more nurturing learning environments.

Investing in education is an investment in Rhode Island's future. Bill Number 5338 will help ensure that all students—especially those in historically underserved communities—have the tools they need

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

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 of Rhode Island