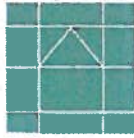


H O U S I N G



N E T W O R K

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Marvin Abney  
Chair, House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House, Providence, RI 02903

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 7693– MAKING AN APPROPRIATION OF \$500,000 TO THE UNITED WAY OF RHODE ISLAND FOR THE 2-1-1 HUMAN SERVICE HOTLINE**

Dear Chair Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI), I am writing to express my support for House Bill 7693. HNRI is the State's membership association of 19 nonprofit community development agencies across Rhode Island who contribute to the sustainability of our local and regional economy. HNRI also serves as the backbone organization for Homes RI, a coalition of 80+ organizations working together to increase and preserve the supply of safe, healthy, and affordable homes throughout Rhode Island.

Although we are not a direct services organization, we often receive calls from Rhode Islanders seeking assistance with housing. We always do our utmost to refer them to the most appropriate resources that will suit their needs, and try to be honest with people about the limitations of our existing social support systems. In 2023, United Way 211 received close to 46,000 calls and contacts regarding housing and over 42,000 for food assistance and 47,000 for health information. This high volume is a testament to the need that exists, and underscores the importance of 211 as a lifeline for vital information and support services.

We support United Way's call to help secure an allocation of \$500,000 from unobligated ARPA funds. This investment will bolster the 211 program's capacity to meet the changing needs of our community, ensuring that it remains a steadfast resource for all Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for considering this crucial request. With the investment in United Way 211, together, we can forge a stronger, more connected Rhode Island.

I'm happy to answer any questions the Committee might have, please feel free to contact me at (401) 721-5680 ext. 104 or [mlodge@housingnetworkri.org](mailto:mlodge@housingnetworkri.org).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melina Lodge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melina Lodge  
Executive Director