

4/24/2025

The Honorable, Marvin L. Abney, Chair
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island Statehouse
Providence, 02903



RE: Testimony in Support of House Resolution No. 5234

JOINT RESOLUTION MAKING AN APPROPRIATION OF \$500,000 TO THE UNITED WAY OF RHODE ISLAND FOR THE 2-1-1 HUMAN SERVICES HOTLINE

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of Pawtucket Central Falls Development (PCF Development), we are writing in strong support of **House Resolution 5234**, which would appropriate \$500,000 to the United Way of Rhode Island to support the continued operation of **United Way's 211**, our state's critical human services helpline.

As a direct service provider and trusted partner within the 211-referral network, we see daily how this system serves as a **lifeline** for individuals and families across our state. Whether someone is facing eviction, needs food assistance, is navigating a healthcare crisis, or is seeking support for a loved one with a disability—211 is there, 24/7, to provide guidance, reassurance, and, most importantly, connection to the help that exists. For every dollar invested in 211, the state sees a **\$7.50 return on investment** through reduced emergency service utilization, faster connection to benefits, and more stability for individuals and families in crisis.

In 2024 alone, United Way of Rhode Island's **211 system responded to nearly 213,000 calls, texts, emails, and in-person inquiries** from all across Rhode Island. That includes referrals to services like the ones we offer our constituents. With proposed federal cuts looming for Medicaid, SNAP, and other essential social safety net programs, we know that **demand for 211 will only grow** in the coming year.

House Resolution 5234 is an innovative, **strategic investment** in a tool that saves lives, strengthens community resilience, and reduces the burden on emergency services and state and local agencies. It also supports the incredible reach of programs like the **Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)**, which serves aging adults and people with disabilities, and the **United Way Outreach RV**, which brings access directly into the community.

As an organization that partners closely with United Way and relies on the 211 helpline to refer community members to critical support, we urge you to approve this resolution. By investing in 211, you invest in the well-being, dignity, and stability of Rhode Islanders from every city and town. Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to access and responsive government.

Sincerely,

Linda Weisinger
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