



April 28, 2025

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

RE: Testimony In Support of House Bill 5976-- A N A C T RELATING TO EDUCATION -- BUILDING
OPPORTUNITIES IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we express our strong support for House Bill 5976, recognizing that access to high-quality out-of-school time (OST) programs is essential to academic achievement, youth development, and long-term economic mobility. A core priority of our Achieve United initiative is ensuring that all Rhode Islanders, regardless of background, have equitable access to the learning opportunities and support systems—both in and out of the classroom—that enable them to thrive from early childhood through post-secondary education. Investing in comprehensive OST programs, we create the conditions necessary for every child to reach their fullest potential, strengthen career pathways, and build a more prosperous Rhode Island for generations to come.

Research consistently shows that participation in high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs leads to improved academic performance, better attendance, higher graduation rates, and stronger social-emotional development. According to the Afterschool Alliance (2023), students engaged in structured OST programs demonstrate better test scores, improved school day behavior, and higher aspirations for future education and careers compared to their peers without such access (Afterschool Alliance, 2023).

House Bill 5976 proposes a \$4 million investment to support afterschool, summer learning, and workforce development initiatives for Rhode Island students in grades K–12. This funding would also provide critical professional development for OST staff and ensure the long-term sustainability and quality of these programs. OST programs serve as vital extensions of classroom learning, helping

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

bridge opportunity gaps for multilingual learners, students from low-income families, and youth from historically marginalized communities.

To ensure this investment achieves maximum impact, we recommend collaboration with out-of-school time partners and sector experts to align resources with programmatic needs. Engaging the OST field in implementation planning will strengthen coordination, enhance program quality, and ensure the investment meets the diverse needs of Rhode Island students and families.

By expanding access to high-quality, community-based programs and aligning investments with sector expertise, Rhode Island can boost educational outcomes and address broader workforce challenges—helping students build the skills and confidence needed to succeed in a dynamic economy.

Investing in education is an investment in the future of Rhode Island. House Bill 5976 aims to ensure that all students, particularly those from historically underserved and underfunded communities, have access to the enrichment and academic support they need to succeed.

By implementing K-12 education policies that address the diverse needs of students, we can break cycles of poverty, close achievement gaps, and create pathways to long-term success for the next generation. We respectfully urge your support for this legislation to build a more just, equitable, and prosperous Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean

Manager, Government Relations & Policy

United Way Rhode Island