



April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026

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

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION H 8202 — CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM - TRANSIT FORWARD RI 2040 — \$100,000,000 BOND QUESTION**

Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we write in strong support of **H 8202**, which would submit to voters at the **November 2026** general election a proposition to authorize up to **\$100,000,000** in general obligation bonds for **Transit Forward RI 2040**—direct funding to strengthen Rhode Island’s statewide transit system.

United Way’s policy and advocacy work is guided by our strategic framework: **Strong Families, Strong Nonprofits, Strong United Way**. We prioritize policies that strengthen household stability, expand access to opportunity, and ensure public investments deliver measurable value. Reliable transit is core economic and community infrastructure: it connects residents to employment, education and training, health care, and basic needs—while supporting employers and service providers across all 39 cities and towns.

The bond proceeds are designed to support transit improvements including **fare technology upgrades**, improvements to **bus stops and shelters**, **access and safety** upgrades, and the opportunity to apply **matching funds for federal grants** tied to high-capacity transit lines, and operational support infrastructure and facility improvements. The resolution also states that funding should support improvement of existing service, expansion to new areas, development of high-capacity transit, improved access, and adoption of technologies that make service easier to use.

This proposal is especially important for households with limited financial margin. United For ALICE reporting cited in recent UWRI legislative testimony indicates that **39% of Rhode Island households** were below the ALICE Threshold in 2023 (poverty plus ALICE), including **51,069 households in poverty** and **122,439 ALICE households**—families who are working and still priced out of stability by the high cost of basics. In this context, dependable public transit is not optional: it is a key determinant of whether residents can accept and sustain work, reach education and training programs, and keep medical appointments. The cost of car ownership further illustrates the pressure on household budgets; Insurance.com estimates the annual cost of car ownership in Rhode Island at **\$28,771**, placing car-dependence out of reach for many low- and moderate-income workers.



Finally, H 8202 is structured to strengthen Rhode Island’s ability to leverage outside dollars. The resolution explicitly anticipates the use of proceeds as **matching funds for federal transit grants** and authorizes the State to apply for and accept federal assistance to carry out the project. This matters because Transit Forward RI 2040 is Rhode Island’s transit master planning framework and is intended to guide service and capital improvements over a long-term horizon.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for **H 8202**. This bond proposal strengthens the infrastructure that families, workers, nonprofits, and employers rely on—and it advances equitable access to opportunity statewide.

Sincerely,  
Elijah McLean  
Manager, Government Relations & Policy  
United Way Rhode Island