



April 28, 2026

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

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL H8351 — THE RHODE ISLAND EDUCATION FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we express our strong support for House Bill H8351, which would establish the Rhode Island Education Funding and Accountability Act and create a more transparent, student-centered, and equitable framework for funding public education across the state. The bill recognizes that Rhode Island's education funding system must better reflect student need, municipal capacity, and the shared responsibility of the state and local communities.

United Way's policy and advocacy work is guided by our strategic framework: **Strong Families, Strong Nonprofits, Strong United Way.** We support policies that strengthen family stability, expand opportunity, and ensure that public systems deliver measurable value for children and communities. This includes centering ALICE households — those where members of the household are working, yet find themselves priced out of stability by the high cost of living. In Rhode Island, 39% of households are below the ALICE Threshold, making equitable education funding essential to ensuring that students from working families have access to the supports they need to succeed.

H8351 takes an important step by aligning education funding with the actual needs of students. The bill establishes a revised funding structure that includes additional weights for economically disadvantaged students, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students enrolled in high-cost career and technical education programs. This approach recognizes that students do not all require the same level of support, and that schools serving higher-need populations must have resources that match those needs.

We also appreciate that H8351 strengthens transparency and accountability. By requiring public reporting, fiscal planning, and a dashboard connecting school expenditures, student demographics, and academic outcomes, the bill helps ensure that education dollars are not only distributed more fairly, but also used strategically to improve student success.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for House Bill H8351. A strong public education system is foundational to family stability, workforce readiness, and Rhode Island's long-term prosperity. By modernizing the education funding formula and centering



student need, H8351 advances a more equitable and accountable system for children, families, and communities across the state.

Sincerely,

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