



May 12, 2026

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

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL H8201 — APPROPRIATION TO HIGHER GROUND INTERNATIONAL

Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we express our support for House Bill H8201, which would appropriate **\$250,000 to Higher Ground International** to support services for immigrant, refugee, and other marginalized communities in Rhode Island, with a particular focus on the West End neighborhoods of Providence. The bill identifies critical services including basic needs supplies, literacy and language classes, clinical therapy, job skills training, immigration assistance, transportation, elder enrichment programming, and case management.

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 systems deliver measurable value. This includes centering ALICE households — Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed — households. ALICE families work, yet find themselves priced out of stability by the high cost of living basics, including housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and technology.

Families navigating language barriers, immigration systems, transportation challenges, workforce needs, trauma, and rising costs often require trusted, community-centered support to access services and build stability. Investments in literacy, case management, job skills training, immigration assistance, and basic needs support help residents better navigate complex systems and remain connected to the resources they need. By supporting services that meet residents where they are, H8201 helps strengthen pathways to employment, health, safety, and long-term family well-being.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for House Bill H8201. Supporting culturally responsive services for immigrant, refugee, and marginalized communities is a practical investment in strong families, household stability, and a more connected Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

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