



Testimony in Support

HB7689

An Act Relating To Human Services - The Rhode Island Works Program

May 14, 2026

The Latino Policy Institute strongly supports HB7689, introduced by Representative Handy, which would enact legislation that represents a meaningful investment in the economic well-being and dignity of Rhode Island’s families.

HB7689 takes important steps to address three major gaps in our current system: low benefit levels, exclusion of immigrant families, and limited child support pass-through. First, it raises monthly RI Works benefits to 50% of the federal poverty level. As of 2023, the benefit for a family of three was just \$721 per month—only 35% of the poverty line. This increase to roughly \$1,036 per month would help restore the purchasing power that inflation has eroded and allow families to meet basic needs with greater stability.

Second, the bill eliminates the five-year waiting period for Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) to access RI Works benefits. This change would align Rhode Island with at least 13 other states and reflects a commitment to equitable access to support, especially for families who are contributing to our communities and economy. Delaying assistance only prolongs hardship for immigrant households and disproportionately impacts Latino families.

The Latino Policy Institute supports HB7689 because it offers a practical, compassionate, and fiscally responsible path forward. The proposed changes would strengthen the social safety net, reduce child poverty, and provide much-needed relief to families striving for economic security—many of whom are from the communities we serve and represent. We respectfully urge you to advance this legislation and continue building a Rhode Island where all children and families can thrive.

Marcela Betancur
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