



CITY OF CENTRAL FALLS
MAYOR MARIA RIVERA

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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 H7706 — Joint Resolution Making an Appropriation of \$500,000 to the United Way of Rhode Island for the 211 Human Services Hotline

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

As Mayor of the City of Central Falls, I write in strong support of House Bill 7706, which would appropriate \$500,000 to support the continued operation and strengthening of United Way of Rhode Island's 211 system.

United Way 211 is Rhode Island's 24/7, multilingual, confidential human services helpline, which connects residents to critical support including housing, food, utilities, healthcare, behavioral health, childcare, older adult services, disability support, and crisis assistance. Central Falls is home to a 70% Latino population of working-class residents and one of the lowest-income communities in Rhode Island. In the face of rising costs for basic needs like housing, healthcare, and food access, our administration is actively collaborating with partners like United Way to ensure that we are filling these gaps with essential support.

As local leaders, we see how important it is to have a trusted statewide resource that can help residents access support quickly, confidentially, and effectively. On the local level, our Office of Constituent Services consistently uses 211 as a trusted resource to connect residents to the services they need. In 2025 alone, United Way served over 1,000 residents and families in our community.

United Way 211 also strengthens municipal and state service delivery. It helps reduce confusion for residents, supports referrals to nonprofit and public-sector partners, and provides valuable insight into the needs facing communities across Rhode Island. The data produced by 211 points to important policy areas for our city to continue placing emphasis on such as safe, affordable housing— which remains a major priority for my administration. Increased investment in 211 would help sustain this key public infrastructure and ensure residents in every city and town can connect to help when they need it most.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your support for House Bill H7706 and the proposed \$500,000 state appropriation for United Way 211.

Thank you for your leadership and your continued commitment to the well-being of Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Maria Rivera
Central Falls Mayor