



May 21, 2026

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

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 8528 — 2026 BOND REFERENDA

Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, I write in strong support of **House Bill 8528**, which would place the **2026 Capital Development Program bond referenda** before Rhode Island voters at the November 2026 general election. The bill includes proposed investments in higher education facilities, housing and homeownership, economic development, career and technical education, green economy and clean energy, and Rhode Island's cultural economy.

United Way's policy and advocacy work is guided by our strategic framework: **Strong Families, Strong Nonprofits, Strong United Way**. We prioritize policies and public investments 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** — families and individuals who are working, yet remain priced out of financial stability by the high cost of living. The ALICE framework recognizes that basic household needs include housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and technology.

H 8528 reflects a broad set of investments connected to family stability and long-term opportunity. The proposed bond questions include **\$120 million for housing and homeownership**, including funding to increase and preserve affordable and accessible housing, support redevelopment, new construction, property acquisition, and infrastructure improvements. The bill also includes **\$50 million for career and technical education**, helping local education agencies create and improve programs that prepare students for workforce opportunities.

United Way of Rhode Island also supports the importance of informed civic participation. Through our **United We Vote RI** initiative, United Way works to increase voter education, voter participation, and community understanding of ballot questions, including bond initiatives. In recent election cycles, United Way has helped educate Rhode Islanders on bond measures that support housing, education, infrastructure, and community development — ensuring voters have accessible, nonpartisan information about investments that affect their families, neighborhoods, and future opportunities.

Bond initiatives are most effective when Rhode Islanders understand what is being proposed, how public dollars will be used, and how those investments connect to community needs. H



8528 creates an opportunity not only to advance critical capital investments, but also to strengthen public engagement around decisions that will shape Rhode Island's future.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully requests the Committee to support **House Bill 8528**. We look forward to continuing our role in voter education and civic engagement so Rhode Islanders can make informed decisions on bond initiatives and other ballot questions that affect the future of our state.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean

Manager, Government Relations & Policy
United Way of Rhode Island