



February 24, 2025

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chair
House Committee On Health & Human Services
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL NO. 5352- AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH & SAFETY-RHODE ISLAND PROGRAM TO ADDRESS ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we express our support for House Bill 5352, recognizing that healthcare is an essential component of a thriving life and a key driver of economic stability. Through the LIFT UNITED initiative of our LIVE UNITED 2025 Strategic Plan, we work to ensure that all Rhode Islanders—regardless of income—have access to the healthcare services they need to live healthy, stable, and productive lives. Without access to quality healthcare, individuals and families face more significant financial hardship, workforce instability, and economic insecurity.

House Bill 5352 presents an opportunity to remove barriers to care, expand access to behavioral and mental health services, and address the health-related social determinants that impact overall well-being. This legislation will help build a stronger, healthier, more equitable Rhode Island.

According to a 2024 report from the Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging, nearly 28% of seniors have experienced significant barriers in accessing specialized dementia care services. This alarming trend underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support and dedicated advocacy for our seniors, ensuring that every individual has access to the healthcare services necessary to age with dignity. This alarming statistic underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support and dedicated advocacy for our seniors. By ensuring that accurate data is collected and maintained, House Bill 5352 lays the groundwork for targeted interventions that will improve outcomes for individuals facing cognitive challenges, while also informing broader public health strategies.

Moreover, the strong collaborative relationship between United Way 211 and the Office of Healthy Aging has demonstrated that coordinated community efforts can make a profound difference in the

Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.

lives of aging adults. Appointing a dedicated advocate to focus on Alzheimer's care within the Office of Healthy Aging is essential for streamlining services, safeguarding sensitive health information, and ensuring that every individual's rights are honored in the documentation and reporting of critical health data. This approach not only drives better health outcomes but also supports workforce development by ensuring that our seniors receive the specialized care they need, ultimately enhancing the overall well-being of our communities.

Healthcare is not a luxury but a fundamental right and a critical factor in economic stability. Ensuring all Rhode Islanders have access to affordable, high-quality care will lead to stronger communities, a healthier workforce, and reduced long-term financial strain on individuals and families. Supporting House Bill 5352 will help advance health equity and create a Rhode Island where everyone can access the care they need to live with dignity and stability. We urge your support in making healthcare access a priority for all.

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