



March 25, 2025
Robert Craven Sr. Chairman
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL NO. H5357 – AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT

On behalf of United Way Rhode Island, we express our support for Bill Number H5357, which aligns with our commitment to ensuring that all Rhode Islanders have access to economic opportunity and financial stability. Through the LIFT UNITED initiative of our LIVE UNITED 2025 Strategic Plan, we work to remove barriers to financial security, support workforce development and strengthen pathways to upward mobility. Equity is at the heart of our mission, ensuring historically marginalized communities have the resources to thrive.

This initiative represents an important step toward ensuring that our justice system operates fairly and compassionately, especially for individuals who are already navigating significant challenges in their lives.

The imposition of costs on women participating in community corrections programs disproportionately impacts an already vulnerable population. Many women involved in these programs are facing circumstances such as financial instability, childcare responsibilities, and limited access to resources. The additional financial burden of program costs can create unnecessary barriers to their rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society.

Rather than placing these financial obstacles in their path, we should be focusing on providing these women with the support they need to overcome the challenges that led them into the justice system in the first place. Programs designed to assist women offenders should be viewed as an opportunity for rehabilitation, education, and reintegration, not as a source of financial strain.

Repealing these provisions will help create a more equitable system, where women in the community corrections program can focus on their personal growth, recovery, and reintegration into society without the looming threat of additional fees. By removing financial penalties, we also acknowledge that the true cost of rehabilitation lies in providing comprehensive support services that address the root causes of criminal behavior, such as trauma, substance abuse, and mental health challenges.

"Supporting BILL NUMBER H5357 helps eliminate avoidable hindrances by repealing provisions that impose costs on women in the community corrections program, ensuring that women offenders have a fair and supportive environment to rebuild their lives."

Sincerely,
Diana Garlington
Policy Program Officer