



April 1, 2025

Representative Robert Craven, Chair

House Judiciary Committee

Rhode Island State House

Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 5178 - An Act Relating to Criminal Procedure -  
Expungement of Criminal Records**

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we support House Bill 5178, which advances equity and social justice for all Rhode Islanders. Through the Advocate United initiative of our Live United 2025 Strategic Plan, we are dedicated to breaking down systemic barriers and championing policies that advance racial, social, and economic justice in every community.

House Bill 5178 identifies an opportunity to improve the outcomes of formerly incarcerated Rhode Islanders with a simple change to the expungement process. By allowing people with multiple non-violent felony convictions to file a motion to expunge all records ten years after the completion of their last sentence, this bill removes the barriers to successful reintegration that exist for people with a record. Expungement is a powerful tool in removing barriers to housing, employment, and ultimately reducing recidivism. Formerly incarcerated people in the United States are nearly ten times more likely than the public to experience homelessness (Couloute, 2018), and many people with felony convictions face discriminatory hiring practices, even though this has been illegal since the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Justice Center, 2021).

United Way of Rhode Island prioritizes housing stability and economic development in our investment in and partnerships with nonprofits providing direct service to Rhode Islanders in need. Our mission of uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders drives our grantmaking and advocacy to target the systems that disproportionately impact historically marginalized populations. The housing stability and economic development programs that are making a difference in our community are more effective when Rhode Islanders have access to a second chance like the opportunity provided in House Bill 5178.

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

Equity is the foundation of a just society. Supporting House Bill 5178 will help ensure that all Rhode Islanders have an opportunity to success. This legislation is vital to creating a more inclusive and just Rhode Island where everyone can thrive. We strongly encourage your support in advancing policies that uphold racial and social justice for all.

Sincerely,

Peggy Desjarlais

Housing and Economic Development Policy, United Way of Rhode Island