



May 27, 2025

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr., Chair  
House Judiciary Committee  
Rhode Island Statehouse  
Providence, 02903

**RE: Testimony In Support of House Bill 6245 -- AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL  
PROCEDURE -- BAIL AND RECOGNIZANCE**

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we strongly support **House Bill 6245**, which calls for creating a statewide bail task force to examine the use of monetary bail and explore meaningful alternatives. Through our **ADVOCATE UNITED** initiative, part of our **LIVE UNITED 2025 Strategic Plan**, we are committed to advancing racial, social, and economic justice—which requires transforming systems that punish poverty rather than protect communities.

**House Bill 6245** is a critical step toward a more just and effective pretrial justice system. Rhode Island’s current reliance on cash bail often detains individuals not because they threaten public safety, but simply because they cannot afford to pay. This disproportionately harms low-income Rhode Islanders and people of color, driving long-term instability for individuals, families, and communities.

Recent national data confirms the urgency of this reform. According to a 2024 report by the **Brennan Center for Justice**, nearly **70% of people held in local jails are detained pretrial**, most for nonviolent charges, and **90% of those unable to post bail are held on amounts under \$10,000** (Brennan Center, 2024). These individuals are more likely to experience job loss, housing insecurity, and worse legal outcomes—all before they’ve even had a day in court. Meanwhile, evidence shows that non-monetary alternatives, including risk assessments and court reminders, are equally effective at ensuring court appearances and protecting public safety.

**House Bill 6245** positions Rhode Island to lead with data, compassion, and fiscal responsibility by creating a diverse and informed bail task force. This effort will center impacted voices and strengthen public trust in a system that must serve justice—not deepen inequality.

Equity is the cornerstone of a just society. Supporting **House Bill 6245** is a step toward building a legal system that upholds the presumption of innocence and promotes safety without punishing poverty. By examining our current bail practices and investing in proven people-centered alternatives, we can deliver a justice system that reflects the values of fairness, dignity, and opportunity for all. United Way of Rhode Island urges your support for this critical legislation.

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

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

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

50 Vallet Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02909 | (401) 444-0600 | [unitedwayri.org](http://unitedwayri.org)