



**April 14, 2026**

**House Judiciary Committee**

**Rhode Island State House Providence, RI 02903**

**Testimony in Support of H7195 An Act Relating to Juvenile Interrogation Protections**

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Diana Garlington, and I am an advocate and Policy Program Officer at United Way RI, and I am here in strong support of House Bill No.7195.

This legislation is about fairness, protection, and ensuring that our justice system recognizes a simple truth: that children are not adults. When a young person is questioned in connection with delinquent or criminal behavior, they are often in a vulnerable and high-pressure situation. Without the presence of a parent, guardian, or attorney, many youths do not fully understand their rights or the consequences of what they say. This can lead to confusion, fear-based responses, or even false admissions that follow them for the rest of their lives.

H7195 creates critical safeguards. It ensures that no child is left alone in these moments unless there is a clear, informed, and voluntary waiver of their rights, or specific legal circumstances apply. This is not about avoiding accountability; it is about ensuring that any accountability is rooted in fairness and understanding. In my work in community safety and advocacy, I have seen how systems can either protect or fail our young people. When we fail to protect their rights early on, we risk pushing them deeper into the judicial system instead of guiding them toward better outcomes.

This bill is a step toward a more just and humane approach. It strengthens trust in our legal system, protects the rights of youth, and supports families in being part of critical decisions that affect their children's lives.

I respectfully urge you to support Bill No. H7195.  
Thank you for your time and consideration.