



May 18, 2026
Representative Carol McEntee, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence RI 02903

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 7199 –
AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY – RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT
RHODE ISLAND SURVIVOR EARLY LEASE TERMINATION ACT**

Chair McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of United Way Rhode Island, we strongly support H 7199, which grants tenants that are the victim of various forms of abuse including, but not limited to, sexual and domestic abuse and stalking, the right to terminate a lease agreement early without penalty or liability for rent. United Way's policy and advocacy efforts follow our strategic framework: **Strong Families, Strong Nonprofits, Strong United Way**. We prioritize policies that strengthen household stability, expand access to opportunity, and ensure public investments deliver measurable value.

United Way of Rhode Island is committed to securing housing stability, the goal that individuals and families have access to safe, affordable, homes that meet their needs. We see how housing instability impacts measures of upward economic mobility, like graduation rates and wages. Investing in programs that support housing stability for Rhode Islanders at highest risk supports the participants and community immediately, and we see the proposal in S 2291 as a strong, positive intervention for the same neighbors toward the same goal. Escaping sexual and domestic abuse is a deeply destabilizing process that can result in a life saved or a life ended, so the supports around someone who tries to leave are critical to their outcomes.

As members of the Continuum of Care in Rhode Island, United Way of Rhode Island sees the work to provide shelter to survivors of domestic violence and the infrastructure required to provide wraparound services to individuals and families. Programs that support survivors' legal rights are critical to re-establishing housing and economic security, and the right to terminate a lease agreement early in this circumstance would support the financial and personal healing of a survivor in the system.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for H 7199 and thanks you for sharing our commitment to the safety and housing stability of **Strong Families**.

Sincerely,
Peggy Afonso, Program Officer, Housing and Economic Policy
United Way Rhode Island