



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

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 8385 –
AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY – RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT**

Chair McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of United Way Rhode Island, we strongly support H 8385, which allows sealing of eviction records for defective complaint or lack of jurisdiction for individuals between the ages of eighteen (18) and twenty-one (21) who didn't sign the lease. 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.

The competition for rental units in Rhode Island remains high, especially for homes that are affordable and accessible. When property managers and landlords receive many applications for the same unit, an eviction on a tenant's record can prevent the tenant from finding suitable housing- even if the eviction case was thrown out. 211, the human service helpline housed at United Way of Rhode Island, took 17,235 calls in 2025 requesting housing assistance. Rhode Islanders reaching out for housing help are renters. Strong eviction sealing protocols are critical to protecting renters from housing instability.

Eviction case sealing can interrupt the cycle of poverty that's perpetuated by housing instability. H 7199 speaks to the generational impacts of a record of eviction by directing the court to seal any minor named in an eviction proceeding, or any 18-21-year-old family member of the renter named in the eviction case. Evictions displace renters, and when a family is renting their home, the disruption leads to school interruptions and discontinued access to health care providers. Housing stability is one of the leading challenges for ALICE families, those who are Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed (where members of the household are working, yet find themselves priced out of stability by the high cost of living). United Way Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for House Bill 7199 and thanks you for sharing our commitment to strong renter protections that translate to safe, **Strong Families**.

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