



March 18, 2026

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese, Chair
House Committee on Labor
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL H 7770 — AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND
LABOR RELATIONS — MINIMUM WAGES**

Chair Corvese and Members of the House Committee on Labor:

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we strongly support **H 7770**. This bill would set Rhode Island's minimum wage at **\$16.00 per hour (January 1, 2026)** and **\$17.00 per hour (January 1, 2027)**, and beginning **January 1, 2029**, would adjust the minimum wage based on the **Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), Northeast Region**, while ensuring the minimum wage does **not decrease** if CPI-U declines.

United Way's policy and advocacy work is guided by 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. Predictable wage growth supports that goal by helping families manage rising costs and remain stable in housing, food, transportation, and child care.

United For ALICE defines ALICE households as those earning above the federal poverty level but still unable to afford the basics where they live. In 2023, ALICE reporting shows **39% of Rhode Island households** were below the ALICE Threshold (poverty plus ALICE), including **12% in poverty** and **27% ALICE**. This means a large share of Rhode Island households are working, contributing, and still falling short of the cost of living—exactly the problem minimum wage policy is intended to address.

The Economic Progress Institute's **2024 Rhode Island Standard of Need** provides a concrete view of that cost gap. EPI estimates that it costs **\$83,239** annually for a single parent to raise two children in Rhode Island and **\$92,375** annually for a two-parent household to do the same. These figures help explain why many families remain financially insecure even while employed, and why wage policy is central to household stability.

H 7770 is a practical approach. It preserves momentum on wages and establishes a predictable structure for future adjustments tied to inflation—protecting purchasing power over time while giving employers clearer expectations for planning.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for **H 7770**. A fair and predictable wage floor is a direct investment in family stability and a stronger Rhode Island economy.



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