



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 7771 — 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** and the **Rhode Island Workforce Alliance**, we strongly support **H 7771**. This bill would set Rhode Island’s minimum wage at **\$24.00 per hour beginning January 1, 2027**.

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. Through the Workforce Alliance, we work with partners statewide to advance policies that improve economic security for working Rhode Islanders.

**ALICE data make the need for higher wages clear.** 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 households are working and contributing, yet still falling short of the cost of living—exactly the challenge wage policy is intended to address.

The Economic Progress Institute’s **2024 Rhode Island Standard of Need** provides a concrete view of that 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 7771 sets a clear wage floor that better reflects today’s cost pressures.** For families managing housing, food, transportation, and child care costs, higher wages reduce the “impossible choice” tradeoffs that destabilize households and make it harder to stay connected to work.

United Way of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Workforce Alliance respectfully urge your support for **H 7771**. A stronger wage floor is a direct investment in family stability and a more resilient Rhode Island economy.



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