

March 18, 2026

Testimony in Support of HB 7771 and HB 7769

Dear Chair Corvese and Members of the House Labor Committee:

As a resident of Providence and active community member in the Olneyville area, I am writing in strong support of House Bill 7771 (Sanchez), which would pay Rhode Islanders a living wage by increasing the state minimum wage to \$24/hour in 2027; or at the very least House Bill 7769 (Furtado), which would increase state minimum wage to \$20/hour in 2027.

Everyday I encounter more and more community members who are having to choose between a healthy meal for themselves and their families or paying rent. Many of our neighbors are working two or more jobs to just afford their basic needs, which leaves them no time for further education, necessary social time with family and friends, or additional skill building.

Rhode Islanders working full-time jobs should be able to meet their basic needs. We are facing a housing and cost of living crisis, and it's more important than ever that we prioritize passing a living minimum wage. According to EPI's 2024 Rhode Island Standard of Need, the living wage for a single adult in 2024 was \$23.46 per hour, but the current minimum wage is only \$16/hour.

I urge the committee to move Rep. Sanchez's bill (H7771) forward for passage this year, it at all possible. This bill would have a significant impact on families and workers in our Rhode Island community, who would then be able to impact the overall economy in more significant ways.

Thank you,

Erin L. Papa, Ph.D.  
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House District 8