



March 17, 2026

The Honorable Representative Stephen M. Casey, Chair
House Municipal Government & Housing Committee
Rhode Island Statehouse
Providence, 02903

RE: Testimony In Support of House Bill 7658—Relating to Towns & Cities – Housing Maintenance & Occupancy Code

Chairman Casey, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Municipal Government & Housing Committee:

On behalf of **United Way of Rhode Island**, I respectfully submit testimony **in support of H 7658 – An Act Relating to Towns and Cities: Housing Maintenance and Occupancy Code – Notice of Violations.**

United Way of Rhode Island works every day with families across the state who are striving to maintain stability in the face of rising housing costs and limited housing availability. Through our **211/ADRC system, housing stability programs, and research on ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households**, we see firsthand the challenges that renters face when housing conditions fall below basic health and safety standards.

Today, nearly **four in ten Rhode Island households fall into the ALICE category**—working families who earn above the federal poverty level but still struggle to afford necessities such as housing, childcare, food, and healthcare. Many of these households are renters and often lack the resources or flexibility to move when housing conditions deteriorate. When housing code violations occur, tenants may be unaware that their homes have been formally cited for unsafe or unhealthy conditions. Without this information, families may not know that repairs are required, or that enforcement actions are underway.

H 7658 takes an important step toward improving **transparency and accountability in the housing system** by ensuring that tenants receive notice when code violations affecting their homes are identified. By requiring that residents be served with copies of violation notices and be informed of hearings related to those violations, this legislation helps ensure that tenants are aware of conditions that may affect their health and safety.

From United Way’s perspective, this legislation advances several important goals.

First, it supports family stability and health.

Housing conditions such as mold, inadequate heating, structural hazards, and other violations can have serious impacts on family's well-being. Providing tenants with notice allows residents to better understand the conditions affecting their homes and to advocate for necessary repairs.

[Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders](#)



Second, it strengthens transparency in the housing system

Ensuring that tenants are informed about violations helps balance the information gap that can exist between property owners and renters and supports fair and effective housing enforcement.

Third, it supports stronger accountability in the housing market.

The bill's requirement that nonresident property owners maintain a registered in-state agent will help municipalities communicate more effectively with landlords and enforce housing standards when violations occur.

United Way of Rhode Island believes that safe, stable housing is a cornerstone of strong families and strong communities. Policies that improve communication, transparency, and accountability in housing enforcement are important tools in protecting Rhode Island residents and ensuring that homes meet basic safety standards.

For these reasons, **United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges the Committee to support H 7658.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued commitment to addressing housing challenges across Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Kyle Bennett

Chief Policy and Impact Officer
United Way of Rhode Island