



March 30, 2026

The Honorable Representative Stephen Casey, Chair  
House Municipal Government and Housing Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence RI 02903

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 8039  
AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES – ZONING ORDINANCES**

Chair Casey and Members of the House Municipal Government and Housing Committee:

On behalf of United Way Rhode Island, we strongly support H 8039, which clarifies how attached single-family dwelling units may be created, recorded, and regulated as subdivisions of an existing lot under current zoning ordinance law. 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.

Housing stability is central to United Way Rhode Island's Strong Families principle. Education outcomes, economic opportunity, and health determinants are compromised by housing instability, which perpetuates a cycle of poverty that can impact a family for generations. Housing support is the most frequent need presented by Rhode Islanders calling or visiting 211, United Way Rhode Island's human services helpline. In 2025, 17,235 Rhode Islanders called for housing help, making up 35% of that year's calls, and so far in 2026, 38% of the callers have expressed housing needs. Housing preservation and production are central to increasing housing stock in Rhode Island, and the state can benefit enormously from creative uses of existing land.

The bill's revision to zoning ordinance law is one such creative solution to the housing shortage. As Rhode Island's cities and towns developed over time, land parcels have been divided in such a shape and size that modern zoning law prevents homes from being constructed where there is, in fact, plenty of room and easy access to water, sewer, and other public utilities. House Bill 8039 supports the creation of attached single-family homes, the division of lots with two dwellings, and the addition of accessory dwelling units. Taken separately, these changes would have meaningful but limited applications, and together they create a strong basis for pro-preservation and pro-development zoning law.

United Way Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for House Bill 8039 and thanks you for sharing our commitment to changing our law so neighborhoods can welcome more **Strong Families**.

Sincerely,

Peggy Afonso, Program Officer, Housing and Economic Policy



United Way Rhode Island