

Memo To: House Committee on State Government & Elections  
From: Kelly Nevins, CEO, Women's Fund of Rhode Island  
Date: April 4, 2022  
Regards: Support of Bill H7736

Women's Fund of Rhode Island's (WFRI) mission is to invest in women and girls through research, advocacy, grantmaking and strategic partnerships designed to achieve gender equity through systemic change. **We are in strong support of bill 7736** which would require bill sponsors to include a brief statement addressing racial, ethnic, gender and disability disparities related to their bill, and whether those disparities would likely increase, decrease or not be impacted by the bill in question.

WFRI spends thousands of dollars each year in researching the status of women and girls in Rhode Island, looking through the lens of health, education, economic security and political empowerment. In 2021, we launched the Women's Well-Being Index that allowed users to see how women fared against men in each of RI's cities/towns. When we release our reports, we share them with legislators, key community leaders and the broader community. Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea has frequently cited our research as being the motivator for her to run for office after recognizing she could have some impact on eradicating the disparities we highlighted.

WFRI advocates for policies that improve the status of women and girls, and we use research to advocate from a fact based platform. The successful passage of the Fair Pay Act last year is an example of this, and the benefit of the new law will help to close the gender wage and wealth gap for all working Rhode Islanders.

It would be challenging to identify even one area of public policy where racial, ethnic, gender or disability equity is not relevant. This bill will help sponsors to understand the potential impact that their own bills would have on the broader community and may also help to identify allies to strengthen and support these bills. Our local colleges/universities and many other community organizations like RI Kids Count and the Economic Progress Institute collect and analyze data, and release reports which can be helpful in identifying equity gaps for Rhode Islanders.

Please join us in supporting this important piece of legislation, which will ultimately create a better Rhode Island for all who live and work here.