



March 30, 2026

The Honorable Susan Donovan, Chair
House Committee on Health & Human Services
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL H 8136 — HUMAN SERVICES -- CERTIFICATION OF
CHILDCARE AND YOUTH-SERVING WORKERS AND OPERATORS**

Chair Donovan and Members of the House Committee on Health & Human Services:

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we strongly support **H 8136**, which strengthens child safety standards in youth-serving settings while reducing a cost barrier for individuals entering the childcare workforce. The bill eliminates fingerprinting and criminal background check fees for new applicants in licensed child care settings beginning July 1, 2026, and clarifies fingerprint-based nationwide background check requirements for adults providing instruction, coaching, supervision, or organized activities for children when their roles involve routine contact with children without another screened adult present.

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 systems deliver measurable value. Childcare and youth-serving programs are core family stability infrastructure—supporting parents' ability to work, strengthening children's development, and ensuring communities have safe, trusted environments for learning and enrichment.

H 8136 strengthens safeguards for children by ensuring that adults who may be routinely working with children in organized activities meet consistent screening expectations. Clear, uniform background check standards help reinforce public trust and support safer environments across youth-serving programs.

Additionally, H 8136 removes an avoidable financial barrier to employment in childcare. Background check and fingerprinting costs can be a real deterrent for workers—especially in a field where wages are often modest, and turnover is high. This matters for Rhode Island's ALICE families and workers in particular. ALICE households are working, contributing, and still struggling to afford the basics. Removing upfront employment costs is a practical step that helps expand access to job opportunities and strengthens childcare on which workforce families rely.

H 8136 advances a balanced approach: maintaining robust screening and accountability while making it easier for qualified workers to enter the field. That combination supports safer care settings, stronger workforce capacity, and more stable access to childcare for working families.



United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for **H 8136**. This bill is a targeted, high-impact improvement that strengthens child safety and reduces barriers for the workforce Rhode Island needs to support children and families statewide.

Sincerely,

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