



May 27, 2026

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chair  
House Health and Human Services Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 8500 — RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT — OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

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

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, I write in strong support of House Bill 8500, which would promote fiscal integrity, transparency, and accountability across Rhode Island's health care system by requiring regular financial reporting and risk assessment for key health care entities.

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 for Rhode Islanders. This includes centering ALICE households — Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed — families and individuals who are working, yet still priced out of stability by the high cost of living. In Rhode Island, 39% of households are below the ALICE Threshold, including 51,069 households in poverty and 122,439 ALICE households earning above the federal poverty level but still unable to afford basic needs.

Health care access is a core part of family stability. Rhode Island continues to face significant pressure across its health care system, including rising costs and provider shortages. The Economic Progress Institute reports that family health insurance costs in Rhode Island have risen five times faster than earnings, placing additional strain on families already balancing the cost of housing, food, transportation, child care, and other essentials.

At the same time, Rhode Island is experiencing a serious primary care access challenge. The Rhode Island Medical Society has reported that an estimated **200,000 to 400,000 Rhode Islanders** likely lack primary care, reflecting a shortage of at least **133 to 266 primary care clinicians**. Rhode Island's pediatric system is also under strain: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT reported in May 2026 that less than half of pediatric primary care offices are accepting new patients, and more than 32% of the approximately 260 pediatricians providing primary care in Rhode Island plan to retire within five years.

In this environment, the fiscal health of hospitals, nursing facilities, federally qualified health centers, and behavioral health providers is not just an institutional concern — it is a direct access issue for Rhode Island families. When essential providers are financially unstable, families can experience longer wait times, reduced service availability, fewer community-based



options, workforce disruptions, and greater difficulty accessing care before needs become crises. For ALICE households, who often have fewer alternatives and less flexibility, those disruptions can mean delayed care, missed work, higher out-of-pocket costs, and deeper financial instability.

H 8500 creates a responsible early-warning framework by requiring covered health care entities to submit quarterly financial reports beginning October 1, 2026. These reports would include key indicators such as cash on hand, revenue, operating costs, bad debt, charity care, and other measures needed to assess fiscal risk. The bill would also authorize EOHHS to identify financial jeopardy, require corrective action where appropriate, and pursue available Medicaid federal match, grants, and other resources to stabilize critical providers.

This is the kind of data-driven oversight Rhode Island needs. The state should have timely, objective information to identify risks before they result in service reductions, closures, or disruptions for patients and families. Greater transparency will help policymakers, agencies, and providers better understand system vulnerabilities, coordinate responses, and protect access to essential health care services.

This approach also aligns with United Way's broader belief that timely data should inform public investment and system planning. Through United Way 211, we see in real time how Rhode Islanders navigate health care, housing, food, behavioral health, utility assistance, and other basic needs. H 8500 reflects a similar principle: when state leaders have timely and reliable information, they are better positioned to strengthen systems, protect families, and respond before instability becomes a crisis.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully requests the Committee to support House Bill 8500.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

**Elijah McLean**

Manager, Government Relations & Policy

United Way of Rhode Island