



March 2, 2026

The Honorable Senator Louis P. DiPalma, Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence RI 02903

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BUDGET ARTICLE 6 –  
QUESTION 2: HOUSING AND HOMEOWNERSHIP**

Chair DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of United Way Rhode Island, we strongly support Budget Article 6, Question 2 relating to the \$120 M bond to increase and preserve the availability of affordable and accessible housing to meet the needs of all Rhode Islanders and support community revitalization through the redevelopment of existing structures, new construction, property acquisition, and infrastructure improvements, with at least \$25M allocated towards increasing production of housing intended for homeownership. 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.

United Way Rhode Island is proud to partner with nonprofits providing housing stabilization to households experiencing instability. Many **Rhode Islanders are just one unexpected expense from a missed rent or mortgage payment** that leads to housing instability that contributes to poor education and health outcomes for families and whole communities. This is especially true for families UWRI has identified as Asset-Limited Income-Constrained and Employed (ALICE). These are households that exceed income limits for many assistance programs but still struggle to make ends meet, and those who have the most to benefit from investments targeted at homeownership.

United Way Rhode Island stands with the members of the Housing Affordability and Land Use Commissions: major investment is needed to increase housing stock across the state to improve affordability conditions. During February's meeting of the Housing Affordability Commission, the Rhode Island Realtors provided several poignant pieces of data that demonstrate how challenging the housing market is for Rhode Islanders trying to become homeowners:

- From 2019-2025, there was a 75% increase in median single family home price, but a 7.6% increase in median household income.
- 23% of buyers of Rhode Island homes in 2025 were from out of state in 2025, compared to 18% in 2019 (25% increase in five years).
- Cash purchases of single-family homes have increased by 48.8% from 2019-2025.
- **First time home buyers make up 21% of single-family home purchases, an all time low. The median age of a first-time home buyer is 40.**



These statistics illustrate a nearly impossible situation for Rhode Islanders trying to become homeowners. Neighbors who are trying to become anchored in their communities through homeownership need this targeted support to stay in Rhode Island.

United Way Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for Budget Article 6, Question 2: Housing and Homeownership and thanks you for your commitment to providing pathways to homeownership for Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,  
Peggy Afonso, Program Officer, Housing and Economic Policy  
United Way Rhode Island