



April 9, 2026

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

RE: WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNOR'S FY27 Proposed Office of Healthy Aging Budget—Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC)

Chair DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, I write in strong support of **House Bill 7127** and the **FY27 budget investments in the Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging (OHA) and the Aging & Disability Resource Center.**

United Way's policy and advocacy work is guided by our strategic framework: **Strong Families, Strong Nonprofits, Strong United Way.** Under this framework, we prioritize public investments that strengthen household stability, expand access to essential supports, and ensure that services reach Rhode Islanders before needs escalate into higher-cost crises.

United Way of Rhode Island is proud to serve as a grantee and operational partner to the Office of Healthy Aging, supporting Rhode Island's **Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)**—a core component of the State's "front door" to long-term services and supports. The ADRC is a program of OHA supported by United Way, and it helps older adults, adults with disabilities, and caregivers access information, referrals, and assistance navigating complex systems.

Rhode Island's older adult population is growing rapidly. OHA's State Plan on Aging reports that **more than 24% of Rhode Islanders are age 60+**, and the state is tied for the highest share of residents age 85 and older. OHA also notes that by 2030, **one in four Rhode Islanders** is projected to be age 65 or older. As the population ages, the needs of older adults and caregivers become more complex—spanning health care, benefits, mobility, nutrition, housing stability, and social isolation. These pressures are compounded by financial strain: United For ALICE research shows that **39% of Rhode Island households** were below the ALICE Threshold (poverty plus ALICE) in its latest cross-state reporting, underscoring how thin the margin is for many households facing fixed or constrained incomes.

Additionally, these investments translate into service delivery. Investments in OHA strengthen the ADRC's capacity to deliver high-value, prevention-oriented supports, including:

- **Person-centered options counseling ("No Wrong Door" navigation):** ADRC helps individuals and families understand care options and make informed decisions about home- and community-based supports, assisted living, and long-term services—reducing the likelihood of avoidable institutional placement. Rhode Island's **MyOptionsRI**



platform also supports this work by helping residents identify services to live independently and, when appropriate, initiate web-based intake and connection to supports.

- **Caregiver support:** Family caregivers are the backbone of the long-term care system. ADRC-connected services help caregivers access education, coaching, and practical supports that reduce burnout and stabilize caregiving arrangements.
- **Medicare/Medicaid navigation and benefits counseling:** ADRC specialists support residents in understanding coverage options and accessing programs that reduce out-of-pocket costs and maintain continuity of care—particularly for older adults managing chronic conditions and rising medical expenses.
- **Integration with 211 for seamless access:** Rhode Island’s model is strengthened by coordination between ADRC and 211, allowing residents to reach support through a single, statewide entry point and connect to aging services alongside housing, food, and health resources when needs overlap.

These investments strengthen Rhode Island’s long-term services and supports infrastructure by improving navigation, stabilizing caregiving arrangements, and connecting residents to the right level of care earlier—before needs escalate into emergency department visits or unnecessary institutional placement. For these reasons, United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges the Committee to support **House Bill 7127** and the proposed FY27 investments in the Office of Healthy Aging.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean

Manager, Government Relations & Policy
United Way of Rhode Island