



April 14, 2026

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

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT — GOVERNOR’S BUDGET AMENDMENT #6- RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM

Chair DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we write in strong support of the Governor’s **Budget Amendment #6** to operationalize Rhode Island’s **Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP)** award and position the state to maximize available federal funding to improve rural health access, quality, and system sustainability.

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 that public investments deliver measurable value. Expanding access to timely, coordinated health care—particularly in rural communities—is central to that mission and to Rhode Island’s long-term workforce and economic resilience.

The RHTP opportunity is significant and time-sensitive. As described in the amendment, the federal budget reconciliation bill **H.R. 1** established the **\$50 billion** RHTP administered by CMS, and Rhode Island is receiving **\$156.2 million in the first grant year** to support healthcare transformation across the State’s **18 rural municipalities**. The amendment appropriately budgets federal grant funds across multiple agencies and sets up the state’s administrative and policy infrastructure to maintain eligibility and pursue additional incentive funding.

This investment matters for household stability and equity. A substantial share of Rhode Island families is working with little financial margin, making them more vulnerable to untreated conditions, delayed preventive care, and destabilizing medical costs. United For ALICE’s “Crosscurrents” reporting (ALICE households are families who are working and still priced out of stability by the high cost of basics) finds that **39% of Rhode Island households** were below the ALICE Threshold (12% in poverty and 27% ALICE) (2021 data), demonstrating the scale of financial fragility that amplifies the consequences of limited access to care. In rural communities—where provider access and transportation barriers are often more pronounced—targeted transformation dollars can produce outsized gains in access, continuity, and outcomes.

Opportunity to leverage UWRI’s 211 and ADRC for maximum impact. United Way of Rhode Island stays on top of the local needs of each Rhode Island community through the operation of the state’s **211** helpline and services offered by United Way’s Outreach RV. In addition, United Way delivers the **Agging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)** in partnership with the Office of



Healthy Aging. These three services already serve residents in the rural communities identified in the RHTP plan. These platforms can be leveraged as part of the state’s transformation approach to strengthen post-crisis and post-discharge coordination by connecting individuals to stabilizing supports that directly affect health and stress—housing stability, food access, utilities, caregiver supports, and workforce navigation. In practice, this closed-loop referral and follow-up capacity helps ensure that clinical investments achieve their intended outcomes, and that federal dollars translate into measurable improvements in stability and health. UWRI stands ready to collaborate with EOHHS, RIDOH, BHDDH, OHA, and local providers to align referral pathways, data-informed targeting, and coordinated care supports to RHTP deliverables.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for Governor’s Budget Amendment #6. This amendment positions Rhode Island to **capitalize on a major federal funding opportunity**, meet required timelines and conditions, collaborate with established 211 & ADRC programs, and drive tangible improvements in rural health access and stability for ALICE households and all Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean
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United Way of Rhode Island