



May 18, 2026

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

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2093 — RHODE ISLAND PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP

Chair DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, I write in strong support of **Senate Bill 2093**, which would expand eligibility for the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship to students enrolled in workforce-ready certificate programs at the Community College of Rhode Island.

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. This includes centering ALICE households — **Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed** — families and individuals who are working, yet remain priced out of financial stability by the high cost of living. The ALICE framework recognizes that basic household needs include housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and technology.

For many ALICE households, access to a postsecondary credential can be a turning point. However, not every student's pathway to economic mobility requires a traditional two-year degree. Workforce-ready certificate programs can provide a faster, more direct connection to employment, higher wages, and long-term stability — especially for students balancing work, family responsibilities, transportation barriers, or other financial pressures.

S 2093 recognizes that Rhode Island's workforce needs are changing and that our higher education investments should reflect multiple pathways to success. According to the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, by 2030, **67% of jobs in Rhode Island will require education beyond high school**, while only **55.2% of Rhode Islanders ages 25–64 currently have a postsecondary degree or credential**. By allowing students in workforce-ready certificate programs to access the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship, this bill helps remove financial barriers for students pursuing credentials aligned with employment opportunities in critical sectors.

Rhode Island employers, including nonprofit and human service organizations, are struggling to find qualified workers. Workforce shortages don't just hurt businesses; they strain the very services families depend on.



Expanding access to certificate programs can help build a stronger talent pipeline, support career advancement, and ensure more Rhode Islanders are prepared for jobs that strengthen families and communities.

S 2093 strengthens Rhode Island Promise by aligning the program more closely with today's workforce needs. By expanding eligibility to students in shorter-term, career-connected certificate programs, this bill helps more Rhode Islanders access the training and credentials needed to pursue stable employment, increase earnings, and build long-term family stability. That is not just a good education policy. It is a good economic policy. And it is an investment Rhode Island cannot afford not to make.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully requests the Committee to support **Senate Bill 2093**.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean

Manager, Government Relations & Policy
United Way of Rhode Island