



May 19, 2026

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

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2226 — EDUCATION EQUITY AND PROPERTY TAX RELIEF ACT

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 2226**, which would strengthen Rhode Island’s foundation education aid formula by including Medicaid enrollment in the student success factor beginning with the FY 2027 calculation. This is an important equity-focused improvement that would help identify high-need students and ensure education funding more accurately reflects the needs of school communities across 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.

S 2226 strengthens the funding formula by using a more complete measure of student need, particularly for students whose household circumstances may not be fully reflected through current eligibility indicators. Many working families face significant financial strain, even when they may not be identified through a single benefit program or income measure. Including Medicaid enrollment in the student success factor helps Rhode Island use available public data more effectively to identify students from lower-income households and direct education resources where they are needed most.

This approach also supports more accurate and efficient school funding. The bill builds on Rhode Island’s existing use of direct certification through SNAP and adds Medicaid enrollment beginning with the FY 2027 calculation. By improving the data used to determine student need, S 2226 helps reduce administrative burden, strengthen the reliability of the funding formula, and better align state education investments with the realities facing students, families, and school districts.

For students, families, and communities, more accurate identification means a stronger chance that resources will follow actual need. When education funding reflects the lived experiences of



students and households, schools are better positioned to provide the academic, social, and wraparound supports that help children learn and thrive.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully requests the Committee to support **Senate Bill 2226**. This bill is an equity-focused improvement that will help ensure Rhode Island's education funding formula better reflects the realities facing students and working families.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean

Manager, Government Relations & Policy
United Way of Rhode Island