



May 5, 2026

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

**RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL S2811 — RHODE ISLAND PROTECT OUR HEALTHCARE ACT OF 2026**

Chair DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we express our strong support for Senate Bill S2811, the Rhode Island Protect Our Healthcare Act of 2026, which would create a state program to provide healthcare services to Rhode Islanders who cannot obtain affordable health insurance coverage and lack the means to pay for their own healthcare services. The bill establishes an uninsured care board and advisory committee, creates a state-funded program to support care for uninsured individuals, and allows funding to support hospitals, community health centers, free clinics, and an uninsured health access program.

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 — households. ALICE families work, yet find themselves priced out of stability by the high cost of living basics, which includes healthcare. For ALICE families, being uninsured or underinsured can turn a routine healthcare need into a financial crisis.

S2811 recognizes that access to healthcare is foundational to family stability. When residents cannot afford coverage, or delay care because of cost, health conditions worsen, emergency systems face greater pressure, and families are forced to make impossible choices between medical care and other basic needs. By supporting providers that deliver care to uninsured Rhode Islanders, this legislation helps protect access to primary care, preventive services, behavioral healthcare, specialty care, dental care, prescription drugs, and other essential services.

United Way also understands the importance of healthcare navigation. Through United Way 211 and our Aging and Disability Resource Center, Rhode Islanders call every day seeking help to understand where to turn, how to access services, and how to connect with available supports. 211 and ADRC help field calls, provide enrollment and eligibility education, and support referrals that connect residents to healthcare, aging and disability services, public benefits, and community-based resources. S2811 complements that work by strengthening the healthcare access infrastructure available to residents who need care but cannot afford coverage.



United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for Senate Bill S2811. Creating a structured program to support healthcare access for uninsured Rhode Islanders is a practical investment in family stability, public health, and a stronger continuum of care across our state.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean  
Manager, Government Relations & Policy  
United Way of Rhode Island