



April 28, 2026

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

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL S3214 — SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS

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 S3214, which would establish the **Central Falls, Davies, and the Met Center Stabilization Fund** to ensure appropriate funding is available to support students in these schools. The bill recognizes Central Falls' limited capacity to meet the local share of education costs and the additional costs associated with stand-alone high schools offering both academic and career and technical coursework. It also acknowledges important costs outside the foundation formula, including transportation, facility maintenance, retiree health benefits, tuition for outplaced special education students, and tuition payments to other public schools.

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** — families who are working and still priced out of stability by the high cost of basics. As we have noted in prior testimony, **39% of Rhode Island households are below the ALICE Threshold**, meaning many working families have little financial margin to absorb instability in public systems, including education. For these households, adequately funded schools are essential to child development, student success, and long-term economic mobility.

The evidence is clear that sustained, equitable education funding improves student outcomes, especially for low-income students. Research from Jackson, Johnson, and Persico found that increased per-pupil spending led to more educational attainment, higher adult wages, and lower adult poverty, with the strongest effects for children from low-income families. Additional research has shown that reduced access to special education services lowers educational attainment, particularly in lower-resourced districts, while recent evidence on stand-alone career and technical high schools found positive effects on graduation, employment, and earnings for students with disabilities.

That evidence is especially relevant here. S3214 recognizes that students in Central Falls, Davies, and the Met require stable investment not only for general operating needs, but also for the real costs associated with **special education, transportation, and workforce-connected learning**



environments. Supporting these schools is a direct investment in student development, skill attainment, and Rhode Island's future workforce.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges your support for Senate Bill S3214. Establishing this stabilization fund is a practical and equity-focused step that will help ensure students in Central Falls, Davies, and the Met have access to the resources and supports they need to succeed.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean

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United Way of Rhode Island