



March 2, 2026

Senate Committee In Labor & Training

Rhode Island State House Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in support of Senate Bill S2173~ Relating to Human Services

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Diana Garlington, and I serve as the Policy Program Officer for the PVD Equity Fund at United Way of Rhode Island. I respectfully submit testimony in support of Senate Bill NO 2173

The PVD Equity Fund was established to address systemic inequities impacting Providence residents, particularly Black, Latino, immigrant, and low-income communities who have historically faced barriers embedded within public systems. Through our partnerships with grassroots nonprofits and community leaders, we consistently see how long-term consequences of system involvement create lasting instability for individuals and families.

This legislation represents an important step toward reducing structural harm and promoting equitable access to opportunity. When individuals carry records or system-related barriers long after a case has been resolved, it limits their ability to secure employment, stable housing, educational opportunities, and economic mobility. These barriers disproportionately affect communities of color and perpetuate cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement.

From a policy and systems-building perspective, equity requires more than programmatic intervention, it requires statutory reform. Senate Bill NO 2173 recognizes that fairness within the justice system includes allowing individuals to move forward without unnecessary administrative obstacles once their matter has concluded.

Our nonprofit partners working in workforce development, youth prevention, violence interruption, and reentry consistently report that sealing eligible records reduces stigma and increases access to jobs and housing. When individuals are able to work, provide for their families, and contribute to their communities, public safety improves and recidivism declines.

This bill aligns with the broader goals of community stabilization, economic equity, and trust-building between institutions and the communities they serve. Policies that reduce unnecessary barriers are investments in prevention, not leniency. They are investments in long-term community well-being.

On behalf of the PVD Equity Fund and the Providence-based organizations we support, I respectfully urge you to pass Senate Bill NO 2173

Thank you for your time and leadership.

Sincerely,

Diana Garlington
PVD Equity Fund Policy Program Officer