



April 7, 2025

The Honorable Joseph. J Solomon Jr., Chair  
House Corporations Committee  
Rhode Island Statehouse  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**RE: Testimony In Support of House Bill No. 5829 An Act RELATING TO FOOD AND DRUGS -- THE RHODE ISLAND CANNABIS ACT**

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we proudly support House Bill No. 5829, which aligns with our commitment to social justice, giving people what they need to thrive to their fullest potential, and community reinvestment. Through the ADVOCATE UNITED initiative of our LIVE UNITED 2025 Strategic Plan, we work to dismantle barriers that are built into the existing systems, and champion policies that promote justice at all levels,—especially in communities that have long faced disproportionate harm from criminal justice policies and economic disinvestment

House Bill 5829 takes meaningful steps to strengthen Rhode Island’s cannabis law by refining the licensing process, expanding the Social Equity Assistance Program, and—most critically—ensuring that cannabis tax revenue is reinvested into communities that have been historically over-policed and under-resourced.

Rhode Island has the opportunity to follow the lead of states that are using cannabis revenue to reverse historic inequities. For example, California allocates a portion of its cannabis tax revenue to youth development, restorative justice, and mental health services. In FY22, the state directed over \$40 million to community-based organizations offering afterschool enrichment, trauma-informed care, and reentry support—interventions proven to reduce justice involvement and improve long-term outcomes (Afterschool Alliance, 2022; California DHCS).

Similarly, Illinois earmarks 25% of cannabis revenue for its Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) Program, which funds nonprofits in communities most impacted by violence, mass incarceration, and poverty. In its first year, the R3 Program distributed \$31.5 million to 80 organizations working in areas

[Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.](#)

such as civil legal aid, youth development, and economic empowerment (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 2022).

Rhode Island can, and should, follow these best practices to ensure its cannabis policy goes beyond legalization to become a tool for equity, economic opportunity, and restorative investment.

Supporting House Bill 5829 ensures that cannabis revenues are not just collected but strategically reinvested to uplift Rhode Island's most impacted communities. By allocating funds toward public health, education, economic mobility, and youth success, this bill helps create the conditions for all Rhode Islanders to thrive. We respectfully urge your support for this legislation to advance justice, opportunity, and inclusive growth across our state.

Sincerely,

Ellijah McLean

Manager, Government Relations & Policy

United Way Rhode Island