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March 6, 2024

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara Chair,  
House Education Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill No. 7615— JOINT RESOLUTION CREATING A SPECIAL JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY STUDENT TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND SYSTEM COSTS**

United Way of Rhode Island is writing to express its support for House Bill No. 7615 the resolution to establish a legislative commission to study student transportation needs. A priority of United Way of Rhode Island is to prioritize the health and safety of children to help them succeed in school through the support of high-quality education programs in early childhood, elementary, middle, secondary school and out-of-school time programs.

United Way of Rhode Island is committed to ensuring equity and access to essential services for all Rhode Islanders. Public transportation is a lifeline for many low-income individuals, students and educators, who rely on it to access jobs, attend school to advance their education and participate in extracurricular activities. House Bill 7615 and the Legislative Commission tasked with supporting student transportation, is essential in combating youth absenteeism and advancing the Rhode Island Department of Education's initiative to promote everyday learning. The database produced by the Rhode Island Department of Education (2024) highlights the consistent improvement in student absentee rates throughout Rhode Island Public Schools, most notably the state's urban core (RIDE, 2024).

To maintain these positive trends and keep local youth in school, United Way of Rhode Island encourages the committee to support House Bill 7615 and establish a legislative commission to better understand Rhode Island student transportation needs.

Sincerely Yours,

Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.





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*Cortney Nicolato*

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President and CEO

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