



Alex Moore, Political Director  
SEIU 1199NE  
319 Broadway  
Providence, RI 02909

May 6, 2024

Subject: Support for H-7686: Enhancements to the RI Works Cash Assistance Program

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of SEIU 1199NE, which represents thousands of healthcare, service, and child care workers across Rhode Island, I am writing to express our strong support for Representative Art Handy's bill, H-7686. This critical legislation is aimed at improving the RI Works cash assistance program, which serves as a lifeline for some of our state's most vulnerable families.

RI Works is crucial for approximately 2,300 babies and young children under age 6, providing often the only source of income for their families. The proposed enhancements in H-7686 will significantly bolster the economic security of these families, directly impacting their day-to-day lives and long-term well-being.

Key provisions of the bill include:

- **Repealing the Full Family Sanction:** This change will prevent families from losing all their benefits due to non-compliance with program requirements, which can be particularly devastating for households with young children.
- **Increasing Monthly Benefits:** The bill proposes to raise the monthly benefit to 50% of the federal poverty level, providing much-needed relief and stability to families struggling to meet basic needs.
- **Establishing a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA):** Introducing a COLA ensures that benefits keep pace with inflation, maintaining their real value over time and helping families cope with rising living costs.

- **Restoring Eligibility for Legal Permanent Residents:** This aligns Rhode Island with 13 other states, recognizing the importance of supporting all residents who contribute to our communities regardless of their citizenship status.

The enhancements proposed in H-7686 are not merely legislative adjustments; they are vital measures that will provide real, tangible improvements in the lives of countless Rhode Island families. By supporting this bill, we can ensure that vulnerable populations, particularly children, have a more stable foundation from which they can grow and thrive.

We urge you to pass H-7686 and help build a stronger, more supportive Rhode Island for all families. Thank you for considering our strong support for this essential legislation. We look forward to its enactment and the positive impact it will undoubtedly have.

Sincerely,

Alex Moore