

To: House Finance Committee

From: Savanna Noe

Date: May 9, 2024

Re: Support for H-7686, Rhode Island Works Program

My name is Savanna Noe; I am a single mom, a student, a survivor of domestic violence, and a Head Start parent and policy council member.

I am currently a recipient of Rhode Island Works. The income from this program has helped me to provide stable housing. While this program has helped to keep me afloat financially, I still find myself struggling to meet some of the most basic needs of my family. This includes housing, clothing, and transportation. With my current income, I often struggle to buy enough food for all of us; many nights I wait until my children are done eating before I make a plate for myself, just in case there's not enough. I often have to borrow money from family and friends around holidays and season changes as my kids need new clothes.

With the current amount approved for RI Works, I'm struggling and sinking further into debt. Increasing the Rhode Island Works benefits would allow me to better support the needs of my children and myself, and also give my family more security. To be able to increase my monthly budget would be a miracle. In addition to the financial benefits, it would decrease my stress, allow for better self-care, and expand the ability of families like mine to live more independently. I would have opportunities to repay debts and work toward greater financial freedom and independence. As a safety net program, Rhode Island Works should be giving families a fighting chance to be financially secure, not keeping in a state of crisis.

Today, my family and I are fortunate enough to have subsidized housing; even still, it's a daily struggle to budget for rent, utilities, food, and transportation. My income averages less than that of a 2-bedroom rental property in my city. Without subsidized housing, my children and I would be facing homelessness.

Each year the cost of living goes up, and food, shelter, and other necessities become more expensive. Three years ago we raised the Rhode Island Works benefit amount for the first time in three decades; since then we have seen a national rise in the cost of living, inflation on essentials, and more and more

families struggling. We need to continue to support our families in Rhode Island by recognizing the drastic changes that are happening around us and finding a way to ensure we are supporting those who are most vulnerable within our community.