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May 14, 2024

The Honorable Marvin Abney, Chair
House Committee on Finance
via email to: HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov

RE: House Bill 7693 (appropriation for 2-1-1)

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

On behalf of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island (Blue Cross), I write in favor of this appropriation request. Blue Cross shares the sponsors' and advocates' interest in supporting this key resource to meet Rhode Islanders' need for access to critically important services.

Whether a person is looking for support with tax preparation or childcare, or needs help with food, housing, or assistance with healthcare, United Way's 2-1-1 program specialists are there to help. The 2-1-1 program is the most extensive information and referral contact center in the state, with a comprehensive database comprising 4,472 agencies encompassing 11,000 services. The program responds on average to 200,000 requests a year.

Blue Cross not only supports this appropriation request. It contributes to the program and believes it to be highly effective.

United Way has been meaningfully strengthening the program to better serve Rhode Islanders. In 2022, they began expanding the referral services 2-1-1 provides. The more robust platform provides the capability to track individuals after they have been referred to better ensure they are actually connected to organizations for the services they need. Data generated by the platform will highlight service standards, capacity constraints, and gaps in services. This information will drive strategic growth and deployment of resources to improve health for all Rhode Islanders. The insights on Rhode Islanders' needs will also be a valuable resource for state agencies.

Blue Cross provided \$1 million to assist United Way's transition to the new system. While much of our work is focused on the payment and delivery of health care services, we know that social and environmental factors have an enormous impact on health outcomes. The RI Life Index (a survey we conduct in partnership with Brown University) has made clear that among the biggest impacts on health and wellbeing are things like access to safe and affordable housing and nutritious food. The 2-1-1 program plays a vital role in helping residents connect with these services.

We appreciate your consideration of this appropriation request. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Richard Glucksman
Assistant General Counsel

May 15, 2024

Honorable Representative Marvin L. Abney, Chair
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence Rhode Island, 02908

RE: Testimony in Support of House Resolution No. 7693

Dear Chairman Abney, distinguished members of the Rhode Island Senate Finance Committee,

At United Way, we are committed to enhancing the well-being of Rhode Island residents by providing vital services and resources to those in need. House Resolution No. 7693 aligns with our mission by recognizing the importance of addressing the needs of our community and promoting initiatives that foster a healthier and more prosperous Rhode Island.

We believe that House Resolution No. 7693 represents a significant step forward in prioritizing the welfare of our residents and ensuring that essential services are accessible to all. By supporting this resolution, we can continue to work collaboratively towards building a stronger, more resilient Rhode Island for generations to come.

Thank you for your dedication to serving the people of Rhode Island, and we urge you to support House Resolution No. 7693.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harper Rhodes", written in a cursive style.

Harper Rhodes
Program Coordinator, 211 Coordination Center for Unite RI
United Way of Rhode Island