



In Support of H-8033, Appropriations Request for Women's Fund of Rhode Island

Memo To: House Finance Committee
From: Kelly Nevins, CEO of WFRI
Date: May 15, 2024

Thank you for reading this testimony in support of H-8033, the \$150,000 appropriations request to support our efforts at the Women's Fund of Rhode Island (WFRI). We aim to close the gender wage, wealth, health, and power gaps in our state. Although we use a gender lens to address community issues, our work helps all those who identify as "different than the majority," such as those who identify as BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and/or differently abled. We should note that our programming is not discriminatory; that is, men and boys are welcome to participate in our work and also benefit from our initiatives.

Earlier this year, WFRI was chosen to become part of The National Philanthropic Collaborative (TNPC) for Young Women's Equity Initiative, a unique opportunity to grow local and national movements led "by and for" young women of color. This funding is an opportunity to collaborate with local organizations engaging girls, particularly girls of color. WFRI is using the initial funding to create a new "RI Status of the Girl" report in collaboration with RI for Community & Justice, RI Kids Count, Girl Scouts of Southern New England, and the RI Life Index. Once the report is finished, youth from RICJ, Girl Scouts, and other local programs, will be convened to reflect on the issues lifted up from the report and create initiatives to address those issues. WFRI's continuing role will to play a facilitating and collaborative role with these youth moving forward.

A requirement of the TNPC grant is that we secure \$25,000 in matching funds by the fall of 2024. With this appropriations funding, WFRI will be able to meet our match requirement and significantly enhance how we work for and with girls and young women. The additional funds provided by the appropriation will support all of our work and ensure that the Young Women's Equity Initiative enable many future leaders of Rhode Island to begin creating meaningful change now.

WFRI harnesses the power of funding—through appropriations such as this and philanthropic giving from foundations and corporations—to create transformative social change for women and girls and our community. We are perhaps most known for our Women's Policy Institute, which trains women to be grassroots advocacy leaders. We also regularly teach workshops on the following topics: Advocacy 101, Self Advocacy, Salary Negotiation Skills, Gender Equity in the Workplace, and Women's Financial Empowerment. A state appropriation means girls and younger women can also engage in and benefit from our systems change work.

Several individuals and nonprofits have written in support of our appropriation request, and you can [access their letters through this file](#). We appreciate the House's consideration of this request to invest in women and girls in Rhode Island.

The mission of the Women's Fund of Rhode Island is to invest in women and girls through advocacy, research, and strategic partnership designed to achieve gender equity through systemic change. Our [Women's Well-Being Index](#) compares how well women fare against men on topics related to health, safety, economic security, education, and civic participation in every RI city/town. Our [policy briefs](#) are written in response to the data found on the Index. You can find more about our work at www.wfri.org.