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March 27, 2024

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

RE: Testimony in Support of H7967, An Act Relating to Property: Homeless Bill of Rights

United Way of Rhode Island (UWRI) is writing to express its support for House Bill 7967. UWRI's 211 social service referral network receives calls from Rhode Islanders every day seeking shelter that accommodates their physical and mental health needs: shelter that treats them like humans. The Homeless Bill of Rights effectively addresses the multifaceted needs and challenges of individuals experiencing homelessness while upholding their fundamental rights and dignity. The proposed updates offer a comprehensive framework for protection, closing legal loopholes and bolstering enforcement mechanisms.

Rhode Island's nonprofit shelter providers know that their services are most impactful when they meet people where they are, and H7967 honors this intentionality. These proposed amendments ensure relevance and responsiveness to evolving challenges by incorporating stakeholder feedback and prioritizing input from individuals with lived experience. The emphasis on accountability and transparency foster trust in the implementation of these rights.

United Way of Rhode Island is committed to securing safe and affordable housing for everyone who makes Rhode Island their home. We believe that providing quality shelter to people in crisis leads to economic stability that lifts communities out of poverty. Please consider United Way of Rhode Island's full support of House Bill H7967 in your deliberation.

Very best,
Peggy Desjarlais
United Way of Rhode Island

