

United Way of Rhode Island Public Policy Agenda for 2015 legislative Session January, 2015

Below is a list of UWRI's policy priorities for the 2015 General Assembly Session. Our public policy and advocacy work is designed to support United Way's strategic goal of changing the lives of 250,000 people by 2020 with particular emphasis on two fundamental areas:

1. Rhode Islanders will learn and improve themselves throughout life.

Legislative priorities:

- Maintain United Way's community services grant in the amount of \$250,000 for summer learning programs.
- Explore the creation of a commission to study the issue of traditional summer school versus the HSLI model and how school departments can reallocate resources to the more effective, experiential learning model piloted by United Way of Rhode Island.

2. Rhode Islanders will have access to the basic supports they need.

Legislative priorities:

- Increase childcare eligibility threshold to 225% FPL – Ensures parents receiving subsidies can keep these subsidies as they earn more, without risk of losing affordable childcare.
- Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) - The credit was recently made fully refundable but reduced from 25 to 10 percent of the federal tax credit. We will advocate to expand the credit so more low-wage workers are eligible to receive a larger refund.
- Advocate for appropriations in FY16 state budget for housing rental vouchers. This funding supports the implementation of Opening Doors, the state's plan to end homelessness. Play an active role in the Zero: 2016 campaign to end chronic homelessness in Rhode Island.
- Monitor activities related to access to affordable healthcare for the most vulnerable Rhode Islanders. Exploration of opportunities to weigh in on public policy activities centered on HealthSource RI, the state-based health insurance exchange.

United Way of RI also monitors, reviews and determines appropriate action related to policy that impacts the Rhode Island nonprofit sector with specific focus on changes to operations, charitable giving, and taxation law.

Legislative priority:

- Secure appropriations in the amount of \$250,000 to support *United Way 2-1-1* operations.

In addition to the 2015 Public Policy priorities to be approved by United Way of Rhode Island's Board of Directors, United Way staff will monitor and take action as appropriate on other important issues, with input and consent from the Public Policy Committee Chairperson, CIC Chairperson, President and CEO, and the Chair of the Board of Directors.