

## American Rescue Plan State Fiscal Recovery Fund Recommendation Cover Sheet

Please submit this document with any recommendations for funding from Rhode Island’s allocation of federal fiscal recovery funds available through the American Rescue Plan Act. This information will be made available to the public along with any detailed documents submitted that describe the proposal. It is encouraged that such documents identify clear goals and objectives and quantifiable metrics.

**This is not a formal request for funds, and submission of recommendations does not guarantee a response, public hearing, or appropriation from the General Assembly.**

Name of Lead Agency: Block Island Health Services, aka Block Island Medical Center

Additional agencies making recommendation (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person / Title: Alison Warfel, COO

Phone: 401 466 2974

Address: 6 Payne Road PO Box 919 Block Island, RI 02807

Email Address (if available) awarfel@bihealthservices.com

Brief Project Description (attachments should contain details)

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Renovation and expansion of the Block Island Medical Center facility

Total request: \$1,000,000

One-time or Recurring Expense? One-time

ARPA Eligibility Category (check all that apply) – See link for further information

<https://www.rilegislature.gov/commissions/arpa/commdocs/Treasury%20-%20Quick-Reference-Guide.pdf>

- Respond to the public health emergency and its economic impacts
- Premium pay to eligible workers \_\_\_\_\_
- Government services/state revenue replacement \_\_\_\_\_
- Water/sewer/broadband infrastructure \_\_\_\_\_

## Proposal for funding through the American Rescue Plan State Fiscal Recovery Fund

Submitted by Block Island Health Services, aka Block Island Medical Center

Contact: Alison Warfel, COO

awarfel@bihealthservices.com

### Funding Request and Rationale

BIHS seeks funding for renovation and expansion of its Medical Center facility, including clinical space for primary, preventative and emergency care, and construction of housing for critically necessary adjunct providers and medical residents and students to support our two full-time providers.

We request support through the ARPA to support our public health response in the midst and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, when residents and visitors on our remote island relied even more than ever on the Block Island Medical Center, the one source of health care on Block Island, separated 13 miles from the mainland. Particular stresses on our community and on our Medical Center during this time include increased demand for primary health care including COVID vaccinations, testing and treatment, and increased demand for behavioral health resources. The planned expansion and renovation to our facility will help mitigate these demands by improving our primary care delivery space, and providing designated tele-health delivery areas for behavioral and other health care issues, as well as by supplying housing for the critically needed visiting provider care (medical residents and students as part of our education program, and ancillary and relief providers) whose supplemental care reduce the incidence of burnout among our two fulltime providers.

### Background and Mission

The mission of the Block Island Medical Center is to promote the health, well-being and safety of the residents and visitors of Block Island. We are committed to providing expert primary, urgent and emergency medical care for the adults and children of Block Island, 24 hours each day, every day of the year. We serve as a source of education and public outreach. This mission requires BIHS to be an integral and responsive part of the Block Island community and our success depends on the generosity and support of our donors and volunteers.

The Block Island Medical Center exists to provide health care to every person on Block Island. It is a critical support to the community's infrastructure and economic viability. The year-round Block Island community is approximately 1,000; the summer population including day visitors can swell to 20,000. In 2020, 1,983 distinct patients visited the Medical Center for a total of 5,176 primary care appointments; there were 832 urgent care visits (with 743 distinct patients) and 847 physical therapy appointments for 151 distinct patients. The Block Island Medical Center provides care to all, regardless of ability to pay, and offers free screening and treatment for uninsured women through the RI Women's Cancer Screening Program. Since the Block Island Medical Center provides health care for every member of our community, including people of every race, color, gender, sexual orientation, and international workers, we are

inherently inclusive. BIHS's regular messages to the community regarding COVID vaccinations and testing and other healthcare issues are sent in English, Spanish and in Portuguese to reach our diverse community.

The Medical Center facility was built in 1989, and is no longer sufficient to serve the healthcare needs of the island. Current clinical space, especially the one room for urgent care, is inadequate. Every injured or sick patient on Block Island is treated at the Medical Center before transfer by sea or air to a mainland hospital, and this project will ensure our capacity to care for multiple patients at once, as is common in the busy summer season. The project also includes better and more space for primary and wellness care, including physical therapy which is in great demand. Our remote location is both a burden and opportunity - Block Island residents traveling off-island for medical care incur financial and time costs, as one appointment often requires a full day of travel. By expanding the Medical Center's capacity for delivering that care on-island, we will both save our community members time and money, and improve the Medical Center's financial sustainability.

May 3, 2022

Dear Senator Sosnowski,

We write to express our support for the Block Island Medical Center's application for funding through the American Rescue Pan State Fiscal Recovery Fund.

We are a young family living and working on Block Island with two children under the age of two. The Block Island Medical Center has been critical to providing for our routine and emergent healthcare. We have received excellent pre- and post-natal guidance and coordination of care with hospital providers, physical therapy, and routine check-ups and are so grateful to have a reliable, local medical center that is equipped to care for us and our children.

A strong and well-resourced Block Island Medical Center is fundamental to our lives here on the island. By improving and expanding the facility and creating more housing for visiting providers, the Medical Center is effectively adapting to meet the needs of the island community. Funding from this appropriation would ensure that families like ours can remain healthy and safe on Block Island.

Sincerely,

Scott & Clair Comings  
808 Mohegan Trail  
Block Island, RI 02807

May 3, 2022

Dear Senator V. Susan Sosnowski,

I am writing in support of BIHS's request for funding through the American Rescue Plan Act for many reasons. My family has owned a year round business and been a taxpayer since 1970. In addition, my husband and I have raised all three sons year round here. It has been most important to have a full time medical center for personal and business reasons. It is most assuring to our guests and 200 (seasonal ) employees that we have a well-staffed and improved facility for the increased number of users that the Center now treats. Housing for providers is non-existent on the island so it is most important that the medical center provide additional quarters to its providers. As you can imagine it is a hardship (both time involved and extra cost) for many residents and employees to seek services on the mainland . I trust that you will support this renovation and expansion. I am free to answer any questions or provide more specific personal experiences if you'd like. Thank you for your assistance and support.

Sincerely,

Rita Abrams Draper and Family

Block Island Resorts, Humphries Inc and KSR Inc

4017423697

May 3, 2022

Dear Senators Sosnowski,

We are writing to urge your support for the request for funding through the American Rescue Plan State Fiscal Recovery Fund toward the renovation and expansion of the Block Island Health Services (BIHS) building. Our current facility opened 33 years ago. Since that time, annual visits have more than doubled. The need for medical services has risen sharply in recent years as our year-round population has aged and Block Island tourism has soared. Our now cramped and outdated building urgently requires a major upgrade. The capital project includes expanded treatment space, housing for the visiting medical residents and medical students working here from April to November, and replacement of all critical mechanical systems.

Fundraising for a \$10 million capital campaign began in 2019. To date pledges of nearly \$7 million have been secured through private and foundation giving, but we need public support to close the gap.

Block Island is a big source of public revenue for our state, bringing in millions of tourism dollars every year, but tourism requires the healthcare safety net provided by BIHS. In 2021, 81% of our 817 urgent care visits were for people without a Block Island address. Nearly 8% of urgent visits require off-island transport. When the company of an EMT or medical student is needed for transport, the strain on our resources is extreme. Furthermore, a high proportion of the off-island patients are uninsured or under-insured, leaving our generous donors and New Shoreham taxpayers footing the cost of their care.

Our appeal to you is also quite personal. The six year-round residents at Lewis Farm are all senior citizens, ranging in age from 69 to 80. We receive our primary care here and are gratified that BIHS has recently stepped up its commitment to comprehensive care and disease management in response to the needs of older islanders. As it becomes more difficult for us and our neighbors to journey off-island, especially in winter, our primary providers have established excellent communication with mainland specialists to coordinate care and reduce the frequency of off-island travel. When Keith experienced a serious problem from January through March, his only off-island visits were for advanced imaging. All other treatment could be provided here. The crisis has now passed and we are extremely grateful.

Please support this request. The citizens of Block Island and its attraction as a tourist destination depend on maintaining a robust medical center in this isolated location.

Sincerely,

Keith and Katherine (Kay) Lewis  
Lewis Farm Road, PO Box 399  
Block Island, RI 02807

May 3, 2022

Dear Senator V. Susan Sosnowski,

I write to urge your support of the Block Island Health Services's request for funding through the American Rescue Plan Act toward renovation and expansion of the Block Island Medical Center.

Primary, urgent and emergency healthcare is critical to our community - to our full-time and seasonal residents, and to the tourists who visit and support our economy. Having a robust medical center here is essential because of our island location. The travel burden to see mainland providers for non-urgent care is heavy in terms of time and cost, and every person on the island depends on emergency care here before transport off island for hospital care.

The renovation and expansion of our 30+ year old Medical Center facility is essential to continued delivery of care into the next generation - by expanding our clinical space to meet current and future demand, and by providing housing for ancillary and adjunct providers whose service support our two full-time providers, reducing the risk of provider burnout.

I represent the Senior Advisory Committee here on Block Island, and know firsthand that the healthcare provided at the Block Island Medical Center is especially critical to the many residents who are choosing to age in place here on the island.

Please support this request; our entire Block Island community relies on a vibrant and up to date medical center and health care infrastructure.

Sincerely,

Gail Pierce  
1546 West Side Road  
PO Box 1237  
Block Island, RI 02807  
401-996-5470  
ggpierce@verizon.net

Dear Senator Sosnowski,

I am writing to voice my support for the Block Island Medical Center's application for funding to help rebuild, expand, and modernize our island's sole medical provider. As you know, our geographic isolation makes island-based access to high-quality medical care essential for our year-round population, and the safety and health of hundreds of thousands of visitors each summer makes this facility vitally important to vast numbers of Rhode Islanders who come to the island to enjoy our open spaces, beaches and hotels and restaurants.

The data describing the dramatic increase in primary care visits to our Medical Center are quite compelling – double-digit percentage growth year-over-year is not uncommon, as the Medical Center continues to develop as the epicenter of health care delivery on the island, reflecting both confidence in the quality of care and an important underlying shift in consumption towards prevention and ongoing care management. We find this growth especially important as our island population ages.

More to the point that this request is not solely for Block Island, I'd urge you to take a look at the growth, over the last several years, in the need for stabilization and transport (often via helicopter) of very serious trauma cases, particularly during summer. These life-saving services frequently involve Rhode Island residents who are visiting for the day or weekend and are involved in accidents which are often serious.

As a member of our Town Council, I know our community has always appreciated your engagement and your responsiveness to our small community's needs and priorities, and I feel no letter supporting this particular state appropriation should fail to include the fact that our residents have spoken very loudly about the need for this facility: millions of dollars have been donated, the business community has sponsored a very successful drive expressing their support, and the Town budget has consistently provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in ongoing appropriated support. I believe, by the way, that we may be the only town in Rhode Island that provides so much direct support to a non-profit community medical facility.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this critical need.

Sincerely,

Keith J. Stover  
821 Beacon Hill Road  
PO Box 1435  
Block Island, RI 02807