

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: SEIU 1199 New England

Additional agencies making recommendation (if applicable): _____

Contact Person / Title: Patrick Quinn, Executive VP Phone: (401) 339-4409

Address: 319 Broadway, Providence RI 02909

Email Address (if available) pquinn@seiu1199ne.org

Brief Project Description (attachments should contain details)

This document outlines recommendations for investing ARPA money in retaining healthcare workers, stabilizing our healthcare workforce, and investing in the care economy

Total request: \$ _____

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 X
- Premium pay to eligible workers X
- Government services/state revenue replacement _____
- Water/sewer/broadband infrastructure _____

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INVESTING IN RHODE ISLAND'S HEALTHCARE WORKERS AND PATIENTS BY SEIU 1199NE

Beyond the immediate impact of COVID-19 infection and death, the pandemic has placed unprecedented strain on our healthcare system. From mental health, addiction and emergency services to obstetrical and gynecological care, key parts of our healthcare system face a host of challenges directly related to the pandemic.

Throughout the sector, workers have made extraordinary sacrifices to hold our healthcare system together and experienced illness, injury, and burnout. Even as short staffing becomes endemic, frontline caregivers and other medical staff have treated higher volumes of more severely ill patients, while facilities grow strained far past their capacity and inequality of access and outcomes persist across race, gender, and income disparities.

That is why it is urgent for state lawmakers to invest in robust workforce stabilization now, using available funds from the American Rescue Plan Act. SEIU 1199 New England, which represents nearly 5,000 workers in Rhode Island, recommends the following:



RETENTION BONUSES

- \$2,000 per current employee each fiscal quarter for a total of four payments
- \$1,000 one-time grant applicable to work-related expenses including loans, childcare, or to offset the cost of unpaid leave due to COVID-19
- A \$3 across-the-board increase in hourly rates of pay



WORKFORCE TRAINING & DEVELOPEMENT

- Create, in collaboration with the state, employers, and unions, a comprehensive workforce recruitment and training infrastructure to provide Rhode Islanders access to quality healthcare jobs
- Provide career development opportunities for both entry level workers and throughout their careers



AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

- Strengthen availability of services, including mental health and addiction services, especially to underserved or otherwise vulnerable populations
- Increase healthcare facilities, including hospital beds, for vital services such as mental health

***Funds disbursement should be negotiated with frontline union healthcare workers.**

***ARPA funds should not be used on travel nurse agencies.**





EXAMPLES OF OTHER STATES' WORKFORCE STABILIZATION MEASURES

MASSACHUSETTS:

- \$400 million for addiction treatment & related behavioral health services, workforce, and infrastructure
- \$50 million for workforce retention and capital improvements at nursing facilities
- \$500 million for premium pay for low-income essential workers
- \$107.5 million for workforce and career technical skills training

Source: www.mass.gov/news/governor-baker-signs-4-billion-federal-covid-19-relief-funding-spending-bill

CONNECTICUT:

- \$12.5 million to fund second round of incentive payments for nursing home workers
- \$54.5 million to address the most acute mental health needs for children and adults
- \$93.5 million for job training programs in high-demand and high growth sectors including healthcare
- \$875,000 to expand the Office of Health Equity to address racial disparities in public health

Source: portal.ct.gov/-/media/Office-of-the-Governor/News/2021/20210426-Governor-Lamont-ARPA-allocation-plan.pdf

NEW YORK:

- \$2 billion for healthcare worker wages
- \$2 billion for healthcare and mental hygiene worker retention bonuses; up to \$3,000 bonuses for full time employees and prorated bonuses for part time employees
- \$2 billion for healthcare infrastructure

Source: NYATEP (www.nyatep.org)

It's crucial that workplace stabilization funds go directly to healthcare workers and to the bedside, where they can most effectively rebuild our state's healthcare system. Rhode Islanders should care for Rhode Islanders, and we should reward the workers who have weathered two years of pandemic healthcare while equipping them to meet new challenges to come as healthcare confronts a new normal.

If the legislature fails to act, we face a series of compounding crises, including dangerously short staffing, inadequate behavioral health services, ER overcrowding, and dire financial conditions that could potentially result in the closure of hospitals and other healthcare facilities. These problems will be much harder to address in the future.