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: ____________________________________________

Additional agencies making recommendation (if applicable): ____________________________

Contact Person / Title: ___________________________ Phone: ____________________________

Address: _______________________________________________________________________

Email Address (if available) ______________________________________________________

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

- 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
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 & DEVELOPMENT**

- Create, in collaboration with the state, employers, and unions, a comprehensive workforce recruitment and training infrastructure to provider 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.
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.