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April 14, 2026

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Rhode Island House of Representatives
House Corporations Committee
(HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov)

Dear Chairman Solomon and Members of the Committee:

The Rhode Island Health Center Association strongly supports H8137.

Under federal law HR 1, the number of uninsured patients will grow. The RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services estimates that approximately 33,000 Rhode Islanders will lose health care coverage because of changes to Medicaid. An additional 13,000 will drop coverage because of the end of enhanced premium subsidies available through HealthSource RI. People who are uninsured are more likely to postpone health care or forego it completely. This means that preventable conditions or chronic disease can go undetected. People without insurance are at increased risk of being diagnosed at later stages of diseases, including cancer. When they are hospitalized, they receive fewer diagnostic and therapeutic services. They have higher mortality rates than those with insurance.

Community health centers are one of the places that people who are uninsured can go for high quality primary medical, behavioral, and dental care. Community health centers are required, as a condition of the federal grant they receive, to treat any person seeking care, regardless of income or insurance status. In 2024, health centers served over 22,000 uninsured Rhode Islanders, about 10% of their overall patient population. The mission of the community health centers is to serve everyone in their community. They exist to ensure all Rhode Islander have a place to access preventive care.

They will not be able to meet that mission with their current revenue sources. Current revenue is insufficient to cover the costs of what will be a doubling of uninsured patients. Without funding, capacity to meet the needs of patients diminishes. Without funding, the health centers will be forced to reduce hours, reduce services, at a time when demand for primary care is increasing.

H8137 recognizes that Rhode Island needs a strategic and deliberate approach to ensuring people who are uninsured can still access needed care. The bill protects funding that would have been spent on health care under the Medicaid and retains that funding for the services needed by people who cannot afford coverage. In addition, it establishes a Board and an advisory committee to design that approach. RIHCA fully supports this effort and commits our support if the bill becomes law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elena Nicolella".

Elena Nicolella
President and CEO

The Rhode Island Health Center Association

Blackstone Valley Community Health Care Inc. ~ Comprehensive Community Action Program
East Bay Community Action Program ~ Providence Community Health Centers
Thundermist Health Center ~ Tri-County Community Action Agency
WellOne Primary Medical and Dental Care ~ Wood River Health