



March 24, 2026

The Honorable Teresa Tanzi
Chair, House Finance Committee, Subcommittee on Human Services
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H7127, Governor's FY 2027, FY 2026 Revised and Capital Budgets, Department of Health

My name is Tiana Ochoa Teo, and I serve as Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships within the Health Division at Family Service of Rhode Island. In this capacity, I oversee the South Providence Health Equity Zone. I am writing to express my strong support for increased investment in Rhode Island's Health Equity Zones (HEZ).

The HEZs are some of the most effective, community-led ways we have to address health inequities in our state. They are more than just programs. They are trusted networks that connect residents, community groups, and systems to improve the conditions that affect health and well-being. HEZs create solutions based on what residents have experienced.

Every day, HEZs support families who face real challenges like unstable housing, not enough food, language barriers, and limited healthcare. These are not distant problems. They directly affect whether a child is healthy, a parent can work, and a family can succeed.

Right now, the budget has funding for HEZs, but it is not enough. If we truly want to improve health and lower long-term costs, we need to invest in prevention. HEZs are a proven, cost-effective way to do this.

By making HEZs stronger, Rhode Island can:

- Improve health and reduce gaps between communities.
- Lower healthcare and emergency service costs.
- Build stronger and more resilient communities.

Today, I respectfully ask the General Assembly to:

- Increase and stabilize funding for Health Equity Zones.
- Invest in the people and resources that make this work possible.

Thank you for your time and for supporting the health and well-being of Rhode Island's families.

Respectfully,
Tiana Ochoa Teo, LICSW
VP of Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships