

May 12, 2026

Brady Dunklee  
30 Hudson St., Providence RI 02909  
bradydunklee@gmail.com  
(401) 450-2183

Representative Marvin L. Abney  
Chair, House Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**H 8211 – Joint Resolution Making an Appropriation of \$10,000,000 to the Rhode Island Department of Health Community Health Worker Initiative**

Dear Chairperson Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

I write today to express my strong support for H8211, which seeks to provide a \$10,000,000 appropriation to the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) Community Health Worker (CHW) Initiative. We are thankful for Representative Kislak's tireless advocacy for CHWs in Rhode Island. This legislation represents a vital investment in Rhode Island's public health infrastructure and a direct commitment to the workforce that serves as the bridge between our systems of care, and our most vulnerable communities.

As a leader in a local healthcare system, a public health consultant with expertise in CHWs, and an instructor at RI College's CHW certification program, I see the transformative work that this workforce does every day to support Rhode Island's most vulnerable people.

The American Public Health Association (APHA) and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) define Community Health Worker (CHW) as a frontline public health professional who is a trusted member of, or has an unusually close understanding of, the community they serve. This trusting relationship enables the CHW to serve as a liaison, link, or intermediary between health and social services and the community, facilitating access to services and improving the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.

Across at least 534 published studies, CHWs have repeatedly proven to be effective at improving health outcomes and reducing healthcare costs across a variety of settings. According to the National Association of State Health Policy (NASHP) and ASTHO, they are essential for advancing health equity, as they address the social determinants of health (such as housing, food insecurity, and transportation) that often occur outside the walls of a doctor's office. By providing culturally

appropriate health education, system navigation, and advocacy, CHWs empower individuals to take charge of their own health, ensuring the healthcare system is more responsive to the community's actual needs. CHWs prevent and reduce avoidable utilization of hospital services, thereby reducing healthcare costs.

**I applaud and support H 8211 because it provides the necessary state investment to sustain and expand a workforce that has proven essential to health equity and community resilience.** As the impacts of HR 1 and other federal policies intensify, making state-level investments in a health workforce that can safeguard our communities' health is a smart strategy.

Thank you again for your leadership in recognizing that CHWs are a cornerstone of a resilient Rhode Island. We look forward to continuing our dialogue and supporting the passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brady Dunklee', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brady Dunklee, MPH