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[clpvd.org](http://clpvd.org)

To: **House Committee on Finance**  
The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair

From: Cheryl Space, Executive Director  
Community Libraries of Providence

RE: **Support for House Bill H8211**

Date: May 12, 2026

FOX POINT   
KNIGHT MEMORIAL   
MOUNT PLEASANT   
OLNEYVILLE   
ROCK AWAY   
SMITH HILL   
SOUTH PROVIDENCE   
WANSUCKER   
WASHINGTON PARK

I write in support of House Resolution H8211, the Joint Resolution authorizing the appropriation of \$10,000,000 to the Rhode Island Department of Health Community Health Worker (CHW) Initiative.

Community Libraries of Providence (CLPVD) utilized ARPA funding from the City of Providence to hire a Community Support Specialist to help our neighbors recover from the ravages of the COVID pandemic. She helped library patrons find after school care for their children, access emergency overnight shelter, apply for food assistance, access mental health and other health services, and apply for jobs. In addition, she coordinated programs to promote mental and physical health, including sound baths, acupuncture, yoga, vaccine clinics, COVID testing, and art therapy. Across our 9 libraries, she created hygiene kits to distribute for free in our public restrooms. Due to the conclusion of ARPA funding, CLPVD has been unable to continue this program. Library staff partner with SNAP benefit counselors, housing support counselors from Crossroads, heating assistance programs, and other community health agencies to continue to provide free support, but would be grateful to have more formal and lasting partnerships to provide consistent support through our community libraries, which serve as trusted community hubs.

I am eager to welcome trained Community Health Workers into our libraries to provide support to library patrons who need guidance to access basic services (food, shelter, healthcare) and would welcome free, culturally relevant, health programs. Library staff are trained to provide reference and information assistance, but Community Health Workers would be able to provide more customized and intensive support. We would be grateful to collaborate with organizations that train, mentor, and support CHW; organizations that thoroughly understand the services, resources, and ethics that CHW follow in working with the public.

Thank you for your consideration of H8211. CLPVD would be grateful to welcome Community Health Workers into our libraries.