



Middletown Public Library

TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN

700 West Main Road, Middletown, RI 02842
401-846-1573 | middletownpubliclibraryri.org

May 12, 2026

Re: Support for H8211 – Community Health Worker Initiative

To the Members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Kimberly Usselman, and I am the Director of the Middletown Public Library. I am writing in support of H8211 based on the Library's positive experience partnering with the Town's Healthy Communities Coordinator.

Public libraries are one of the few places where anyone can walk through the doors without an appointment, without cost, and without stigma. Because of that, libraries often become natural access points for residents seeking information, support, connection, or help navigating difficult situations.

At the Middletown Public Library, we worked closely with Middletown's Healthy Communities Coordinator, Lori Turner, through community programs, outreach initiatives, trainings, referrals, and weekly open office hours she scheduled at the library. This partnership created a trusted connection point for residents while also giving library staff an important resource when responding to situations involving vulnerable patrons or residents in need of additional support.

Lori provided staff training related to mental health and difficult patron situations, coordinated outreach efforts with community partners, and helped connect residents with appropriate services and resources. The library also partnered with her office on educational programs, outreach events, and community initiatives serving residents of all ages.

One example involved an elderly patron who could no longer safely care for herself independently and was being dropped off at the library for extended periods of time. Lori helped our staff navigate the situation compassionately and appropriately, assisted with connecting the family to resources, and helped identify ways for the patron to continue accessing library services safely.

Our experience in Middletown demonstrates how valuable partnerships between libraries and community health or outreach professionals can be. Libraries are trusted community spaces, and collaboration with these types of positions can help residents better access services, reduce barriers to assistance, and strengthen connections between local organizations and the people they serve.

Thank you for your consideration of H8211 and for your support of Rhode Island communities.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Usselman
Library Director
Middletown Public Library