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May 14, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House

**Re: Support for House Bill 7689 – An Act Relating to Human Services – The Rhode Island Works Program; and
House Bill 8268 – An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – The Healthcare Services Funding Plan Act**

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Protect Our Healthcare Coalition is a group of leading Rhode Island nonprofit organizations and consumer groups with a shared mission to protect, improve, and expand equitable access to quality, person-centered, affordable health care for all.

The Coalition respectfully submits testimony in **support** of **House Bill 7689**, which would expand access to Rhode Island Works for lawful permanent residents and would increase monthly case payments to one hundred percent (100%) of the federal poverty guidelines, and of **House Bill 8268**, which would establish a permanent funding mechanism for both the MomsPRN and PediPRN programs through a reasonable health plan assessment.

Rhode Island Works provides cash assistance to families with children 18 years old and under (18 year olds have to be in high school or pursuing a GED) and work readiness programs for parents. H 7689 would allow Rhode Islanders with lawful permanent residency, those who have their Green Card, to access critical benefits from Rhode Island Works without waiting for five years. Lawful permanent residents already have to wait significant amounts of time to even get a Green Card, and they should be eligible for RI Works as soon as they receive their status change.

H 7689 would also increase the monthly cash assistance available from a fixed amount to 100% of the federal poverty guideline as set by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for that year. Rhode Islanders are facing increased costs in all aspects of life – including healthcare, food, rent, and gas – these benefits should similarly adjust to a guideline that changes annually.

The need for pregnancy, postpartum, and pediatric access to mental health support is urgent and growing. Rhode Island's primary care practitioners have become the frontline for initial mental health care, and they often do not always have extensive training in mental healthcare or knowledge in navigating the complex and overtaxed system to connect patients to care. Rhode Island's MomsPRN and PediPRN programs help address this gap: the programs have supported 1,386 healthcare professionals at 486 practices across the state to serve 5,858 perinatal and pediatric patients (as of September 2025).

The exceptional and effective PediPRN and MomsPRN network faces a funding dilemma. Federal grant funding for MomsPRN has ended, and federal grant funding for PediPRN is scheduled to end in September, 2026. The Governor's proposed budget includes funding for MomsPRN, but not for PediPRN. If no funding is allocated, the PediPRN program will close.

The MomsPRN and PediPRN networks mean that help is just a phone call away for pediatricians and primary care doctors. These critical networks have been proven effective and are keeping kids and moms out of delayed, more costly care.

These bills are critical steps in addressing Rhode Islanders' healthcare and basic needs, and the Coalition encourages the Committee to recommend their passage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Alexandra Steinberg
Coordinator, Protect Our Healthcare Coalition

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition partners include: Economic Progress Institute, RIPIN, Mental Health Association RI, Latino Policy Institute, United Way of Rhode Island, Senior Agenda Coalition RI, RI Medical Society, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU Rhode Island Council, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Blood Cancer United, RI Coalition to End Homelessness, Rhode Island Working Families Party, Mental Health Recovery Coalition, RI Community Food Bank, RI Psychological Association, Substance Use & Mental Health Leadership Council, Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, HousingWorks RI, Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP), National Association of Social Workers RI Chapter, The Womxn Project, Advocates for Better Care
