

RHODE ISLAND HEALTH INITIATIVE

Right now, **our health care system needs help.**

Health care absolutely must be accessible and affordable for all Rhode Islanders. But for too many people in our state, care is too expensive or too difficult to obtain. We also know that many health care providers are feeling enormous strain due to a range of factors.



The Rhode Island HEALTH Initiative: Holistic Enhancement and Access Legislation for Total Health seeks to address these challenges through a focus on **consumer protection, provider availability and care quality, cost containment, and health system financial stability.**

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Checking coverage eligibility for uninsured patients

This legislation (*Senator Pam Lauria, [2024-S 2714](#)*) would require all hospitals to screen uninsured patients for Medicaid, Medicare, and other financial assistance programs.

Addressing medical debt for Rhode Islanders

Proposals include the state purchase of Medical debt through ARPA funding (*Senator Mark McKenney, [2024-S 2712](#)*), the prohibition of medical debt reporting to credit bureaus (*Senator Melissa Murray, [2024-S 2709](#)*), establishment of a medical debt interest rate cap (*Senator John Burke, [2024-S 2710](#)*), and a prohibition on medical debt attachments (*Senator Jacob Bissaillon, [2024-S 2711](#)*).

Providing protections against surprise billing

This legislation (*Senator Alana DiMario, [2024-S 2715](#)*) would include ambulance service as part of the emergency provisions of the insurance statutes and expand balance billing protections to put Rhode Island in line with many New England states.

PROVIDER AVAILABILITY & CARE QUALITY

Enhanced training & retention of primary care providers

Proposals include funding primary care practices to serve as enhanced interdisciplinary clinical training sites (*Senator Pamela Lauria, [2024-S 2716](#)*) and establishment of a Primary Care Scholarship Program (*Senator Pamela Lauria, [2024-S 2717](#)*).

Expanding access to telehealth

The Uniform Telehealth Act (*Senator Pamela Lauria, [2024-S 2179](#)*) would allow for registered out-of-state health care practitioners to provide telehealth services to patients, as long as the work is consistent with the provider's scope and standards.

Strengthening Rhode Island's health care workforce

These proposals would have Rhode Island join or adopt interstate compacts for licensing in various professions, including the Social Work Interstate Licensure Compact (*Senator Alana DiMario, [2024-S 2184](#)*) and agreements related to counseling (*Senator Matthew LaMountain, [2024-S 2183](#)*), audiology and speech-language pathology (*Senate President Pro Tempore Hanna Gallo, [2024-S 2173](#)*), physician assistants (*Senator Bridget Valverde, [2024-S 2178](#)*), and occupational therapy (*Senator Joshua Miller, [2024-S 2623](#)*).

Other legislation would allow for Medicaid reimbursement for services provided by an intern to help offset the supervising facility's costs in having interns (*Senator Alana DiMario, [2024-S 2713](#)*), allow for a nurse to be exempt from certain licensing requirements to practice before taking and receiving results from the NCLEX (*Majority Whip Valarie Lawson, [2024-S 2083](#)*) and streamline physical therapy licensing (*Senator Matthew LaMountain, [2024-S 2718](#)*).

COST CONTAINMENT

Ensuring medication is affordable for Rhode Islanders

This legislation (*Senator Alana DiMario, [2024-S 2719](#)*) would create a drug affordability commission to receive and review manufacturers' submissions. The commission would determine whether the cost of a drug under review is affordable and be authorized to establish a cost or payment rate for the drug to which all state programs, local governments, state-licensed commercial health plans (including state marketplace plans), state-licensed pharmacies, wholesalers and distributors must abide.

Fairness and transparency in pricing

These proposals include legislation to ensure that cost savings from pharmaceutical coupons are provided to the consumer and not the insurer or another party (*Senator Robert Britto, [2024-S 2720](#)*), prevent hospital systems from charging the more expensive hospitals rate for services rendered at offsite locations such as primary care offices (*Senator Joshua Miller, [2024-S 2721](#)*), and require hospitals to publish pricing information in both consumer-friendly and comprehensive formats (*Minority Leader Jessica de la Cruz, [2024-S 2078](#)*).

HEALTH SYSTEM FINANCIAL STABILITY

Addressing reimbursement rates

These proposals include adding a continuous Medicaid reimbursement rate review process into the mandate of the State of Rhode Island Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (*Senator V. Susan Sosnowski, [2024-S 2722](#)*) and adding primary care to the rate review process (*Majority Leader Ryan Pearson, [2024-S 2723](#)*).

Access and accountability

These proposals would make carriers offering dental coverage subject to an 85% medical loss ratio (MLR) to ensure dental premiums are used to provide services (*President Pro Tempore Hanna Gallo, [2024-S 2724](#)*) and protect prescription benefit access for Rhode Island's most vulnerable residents by protecting 340B providers from discriminatory practices (*Senator Bridget Valverde, [2024-S 2725](#)*).