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April 14, 2026

The Honorable Senator Louis DiPalma
Rhode Island State Senate
Senate Finance Committee

Dear Chairman DiPalma and Members of the Committee:

The Rhode Island Health Center Association (RIHCA) strongly **supports** the proposed SFY2026 and SFY2027 Budget Amendments authorizing funding for Rhode Island's Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP).

RIHCA represents Rhode Island's eight community health centers (CHCs). They provide high-quality, comprehensive care to residents across the state, with a focus on those living in communities, including rural areas, where access to health care can be difficult.

The proposed amendments are a necessary and urgent step to activate the \$156 million federal investment awarded to Rhode Island by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and to allow implementation work to begin without further delay. RIHCA is prepared to work with EOHHS on several key initiatives:

- Developing and supporting a Rural Residency to expand the rural primary care pipeline and strengthen recruitment and retention.
- Advancing Primary Care Practice Transformation by supporting CHCs in transitioning to Alternative Payment Models (APMs) that promote care coordination, behavioral health integration, and whole-person care.
- Providing technical assistance and capacity building for rural-serving practices to ensure readiness for value-based care participation.

The state's RHTP proposal recognizes the crucial role community health centers play in providing services to their patients. The funding will strengthen community health centers and their capacity to continue delivering high quality care to 1 in 5 Rhode Islanders. We respectfully urge the Committee to advance these amendments and ask that all necessary legislative action be taken promptly so that this important work may begin.

Sincerely,

Elena Nicolella

Elena Nicolella
President and CEO

The Rhode Island Health Center Association

Blackstone Valley Community Health Care Inc. ~ Comprehensive Community Action Program
East Bay Community Action Program ~ Providence Community Health Centers
Thundermist Health Center ~ Tri-County Community Action Agency
WellOne Primary Medical and Dental Care ~ Wood River Health