



April 9, 2026

Dear Chair DiPalma and Members Senate Finance Committee,

SACRI's mission is to mobilize people to implement an agenda that improves the quality of life of older Rhode Islanders and adults with disabilities. In thinking about improving *quality of life*, promoting timely access to needed health and long term care ranks as one of SACRI's top priorities. Several of the budget Articles being heard today deal with health and long term care funding and we are pleased to for the opportunity to offer comments on H7127 Articles 8 and 11 and the Office of Healthy Aging in the Department of Human Services.

Article 1. SACRI expresses its support of the \$200,000 allocation for the United Way of Rhode Island's 211 program. UWRI's 211 program connects thousands of Rhode Islanders to local resources like housing, food, healthcare, long term supports and services and affordable childcare. With ongoing federal changes in eligibility for public benefits, it is important that Rhode Islanders have access to easy-to-use resources that provide reliable information, like 211.

Article 8.

This article adds an additional \$23.9M in payments to hospitals for uncompensated care which is expected to increase as the number of uninsured persons increases from the impact of HR1. SACRI supports this increase but recognizes this amount may not be sufficient to address the projected need and encourage you to consider allocating an amount representing the value of the cost savings due to projected decreased Medicaid enrollments.

Section 2. We are concerned that limiting provider rate increases especially for nursing facilities to 2.5% is not sufficient for providing quality health and long term care. Hundreds of vulnerable older adults and adults with disabilities reside in our state's nursing facilities and urge your consideration of providing the full 3.2% as recommended by CMS. We also support the creation of the "Nursing Facility Rate Adjustment Wage Pass-through Compliance" fund and would recommend that the required certification reports relating to compensation increases resulting from inflation adjustments be made public.

Section 6. SACRI appreciates that the Governor's budget would provide for one-half of the recommended rate increases for home and community providers as determined by the mandated OHIC rate review process. However, as home care worker shortages continue with persons waiting several months to receive services, we urge your consideration of providing for the full rate increase. We also recommend that you amend the law to require reporting on how the rate increases have impacted service wait lists, direct care staff compensation and worker recruitment and retention efforts. In addition, we request you consider higher rate increases for those Assisted Living Residences that are Medicaid certified at the highest acuity levels. Many of the residents have dementia and high personal care needs. Providing adequate rates would encourage more assisted living programs to care for these persons who would likely be eligible for nursing home level of care at much higher cost to the Medicaid program.

Article 11.

Section 14. Authorizes the RI Health Benefit Exchange to establish a state marketplace affordability Program to help mitigate the impact of the high and increasing growth of healthcare costs for low- and middle-income persons who purchase health insurance through the exchange. SACRI appreciates that the Governor's proposed budget recognizes that the expiration of the extended premium tax credits has resulted in significant increases in health insurance premiums (a doubling from 2025 to 2026) for those purchasing health insurance through the state insurance marketplace. These increases are projected to cause 13,000 HealthSource RI enrollees to drop their coverage between 2026 and 2027. Dropping health insurance altogether will cause persons with emergent health issues to go untreated and seek care in emergency rooms putting added financial strain on our hospitals. The Governor's budget proposes a limited replacement of the expanded tax credits for those with incomes up to 200%FPL. This would only replace federal assistance for about half (20,000) HealthSourceRI enrollees. Together with other federal changes, the state's uninsured population would more than double and undermine the stability of our healthcare system. I encourage you to consider a more extensive replacement of the expired federal tax credits than that proposed in the Governor's budget.

Office of Healthy Aging.

SACRI supports the additional \$50,000 in budget for Part-Time legal staff. This position will assist with Volunteer Guardian Program which in which volunteers that serve as guardians of person for persons in institutional care. Funding for this program was cut down to \$40,000.

Additional funding for Long Term Care Ombudsman program needed

SACRI respectfully requests you recommend the addition of \$100,000 to the FY2027 Office of Healthy Aging budget to provide additional resources to the Alliance for Better Long Term Care to operate the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP.) The RI LTCOP plays a critical federal and state mandated role in protecting the rights, dignity, and well-being of persons residing in the state's 76 licensed nursing facilities (8,405 beds), 65 assisted living residences (5,209 units), residents of the Bristol Veterans Home and the Eleanor Slater Hospital. Established under the Older Americans Act, and RIGL42-66.7-12, the program serves as the only independent advocacy entity solely dedicated to these residents. From 2023 to 2025 the number of complaints to the LTCOP tripled – from 597 to 1797. Current LTCOP staffing level is straining staff which does not meet national standards for ombudsman programs as recommended by the Institute of Medicine.

Respectfully submitted,
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