

TO: Senate Finance Committee  
SUBJECT: Support for S-2811, S-2828, S-2667

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Merrill Schmidt, and I live in Cranston. I am writing in support of S-2811 RI Protect Our Healthcare Act, S-2828 Expand RI Works, and S-2667 Childcare Is Essential. These bills would support tens of thousands of Rhode Islanders who are struggling to get by due to low wages and the high cost of living in the state.

Sen. DiPalma's RI Protect Our Healthcare Act (S-2811) would expand funding for uncompensated care and strengthen existing infrastructure to ensure that the 50,000+ Rhode Islanders losing health coverage due to the "Big Beautiful Bill" can still access healthcare beyond the emergency room. I'm very concerned about my neighbors who don't have health insurance through their job and cannot afford the Marketplace plans or are unable to access Medicaid. The high cost of healthcare makes not having insurance very risky and often financially ruinous. Passing this bill will help more Rhode Islanders access healthcare, prevent high levels of medical debt and financial ruin, and make it easier for individuals to switch jobs and pursue various options.

Sen. Murray's Expand RI Works (S-2828) would increase the RI Works benefit to 100% FPL and link to inflation; restore eligibility to legal permanent residents; increase the child support pass-through; and remove the benefit reduction for families living in subsidized housing. This bill would help Rhode Island families who are trying to get by with limited income and reduce childhood poverty and homelessness. It is extremely hard to get by in Rhode Island even on a middle-class salary, so I think it is imperative that we provide more support for families struggling to get by on low wages.

Finally, Sen. Vargas's Child Care Is Essential (S-2667) would expand income eligibility for Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP); expand income eligibility for the CCAP for Child Care Educators pilot program; and increase provider rates for childcare programs. I have a child in daycare, and I would not be able to work full-time without this essential support. I know that many parents are in the same boat but unfortunately cannot afford the high cost of childcare or on a long waitlist for a childcare provider. I think this bill is very important for supporting our state's childcare providers and making child care more accessible to parents.

I urge you to address some of the biggest needs in our state (healthcare, childcare, poverty) and support Rhode Island families by passing S-2811 RI Protect Our Healthcare Act, S-2828 Expand RI Works, and S-2667 Childcare Is Essential.

Thanks for your consideration,

Merrill Schmidt