



www.ProtectHealthRI.org

May 5, 2026

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House

**Re: Support for Senate Bill 2542 – An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – Health Care
for Children and Pregnant Women; and
For Senate Bill 2828 – An Act Relating to Human Services – The Rhode Island Works
Program**

Dear Chair DiPalma and 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** for Senate Bill 2542, which would increase the Medicaid reimbursement rates to 130% of the Medicare rates for outpatient pediatric services, and for Senate Bill 2828, 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.

Senate Bill 2542 would improve the capacity of Rhode Island's pediatricians to provide quality care for babies and children.

Primary care, and especially pediatric care, is in crisis as demonstrated most recently with the closing of Anchor Medical. The current shortage of pediatric health care professionals has been documented [nationally](#) and [in Rhode Island](#). As with the broader crisis in primary care, it is expected to worsen and is affecting families of all income levels.

Physicians are aging out, retiring early, or cutting back their hours. Those who remain have seen their patient rosters swell. Administrative burden, combined with decades of low reimbursement and under-investment continues to exacerbate the crisis. ***For too many Rhode Islanders, a health insurance card in their pocket doesn't help if they can't access the care they need when they need it.***

In SFY 2023, [Medicaid provided](#) comprehensive health insurance to 183,193 children, parents, and pregnant women through the RIte Care program. That same year, 4,112 (44%) of babies born in Rhode Island had Medicaid/RIte Care insurance. Medicaid is critical to supporting the system we all rely on, therefore, increasing Medicaid rates for pediatric care will help improve access to care for every child in Rhode Island.

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. Senate Bill 2828 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.

This bill 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.

S2542 and S2828 are two critical steps in addressing the much broader crises in primary care and public benefits, respectively, 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 for the Homeless, 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
