



March 12, 2026

The Honorable Melissa A. Murray, Chair
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Rhode Island State Senate
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: SENATE BILL 2689 – AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Dear Chair Murray and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we write to express our support for Senate Bill 2689, which would direct the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) to convene and support a statewide network of Equity Zones where local multisector collaboratives can address the social determinants of health at the community level.

Municipalities are often on the front lines of addressing the complex social, economic, and health challenges facing Rhode Island residents. Local governments work daily with community organizations, schools, public safety agencies, healthcare providers, and residents to respond to issues such as housing stability, access to services, economic opportunity, and community wellness. Senate Bill 2689 recognizes the importance of these local partnerships by formally supporting a framework where municipalities can collaborate with nonprofits, service providers, advocates, and state agencies to develop community-driven solutions.

The establishment of a coordinated network of Equity Zones will help strengthen the ability of municipalities to address health and economic disparities by fostering local leadership, encouraging civic engagement, and supporting capacity-building efforts. Importantly, the bill's emphasis on data sharing, technical assistance, and cross-agency coordination will provide communities with the tools necessary to identify challenges, implement targeted strategies, and share best practices across Rhode Island.

For many cities and towns, partnerships like those envisioned in this legislation are essential to addressing the underlying social factors that influence public health outcomes. By supporting collaborative efforts at the local level and promoting a "whole-of-government" approach across state agencies, Senate Bill 2689 will help ensure that municipalities have the support and resources needed to respond effectively to community needs.

The League also appreciates the bill's recognition of the importance of sustaining and strengthening existing Equity Zones through a combination of state and federal funding. Stable support for these initiatives will allow municipalities and their community partners to continue building long-term strategies that improve quality of life and promote healthier, more resilient communities.

We thank the sponsor for bringing forward this important legislation and for recognizing the critical role that municipalities play in addressing the social determinants of health. The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns respectfully urge favorable consideration of Senate Bill 2689.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. R. Rossi', written in a cursive style.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of Senate Health and Human Services Committee