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Rhode Island General Assembly, State Senate
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
(Submitted electronically via SLegislation@rilegislature.gov)

Dear Chair Murray and Members of the Committee:

Please accept the Rhode Island Health Center Association's letter of support for **Senate Bill 2862**, which would allow limited licensing for foreign-trained dental health professionals.

This legislation represents an important and timely step toward addressing dental workforce shortages across Rhode Island. Many residents, particularly those in underserved and low-income communities, adults with Medicaid, and the uninsured, continue to face significant barriers to accessing oral healthcare.

From 2023 to 2024, Rhode Island's eight community health centers experienced an increase of 13,000 additional patients and 19,000 additional visits. This surge underscores both the growing demand for services and the essential role these providers play for both commercially and publicly insured patients. Without sufficient staffing, gaps in access to care will continue to widen.

Many foreign-trained dental professionals complete rigorous educational training and bring valuable clinical experience. Their cultural competence, language skills, and adaptability can enhance patient trust and improve health outcomes, especially in communities where cultural understanding is critical to care delivery.

Senate Bill 2862 establishes clear safeguards to ensure high professional standards, including graduation from reputable dental institutions, successful completion of a board-approved examination, and practice under the supervision of a licensed dentist. These measures appropriately balance the need to expand access to care with the responsibility to uphold the standards of Rhode Island's dental profession, while supporting growing patient demand.

For patients, the legislation can lead to earlier diagnosis, improved management of chronic conditions, and reduced reliance on emergency departments for preventable dental issues.

For community health centers, limited licensing strengthens workforce capacity, improves continuity of care, and supports team-based models essential to serving high-need populations.

Rhode Island has already taken similar steps in other areas of healthcare. In 2025, legislation supporting licensure pathways for foreign-trained physicians was signed into law, reflecting the state's broader commitment to responsibly integrating internationally trained healthcare professionals into the workforce.

Together, these efforts demonstrate that Rhode Island can uphold high standards while addressing urgent workforce needs.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support for Senate Bill 2862.

Sincerely,

M Campbell

Melissa Campbell
Policy Manager

The Rhode Island Health Center Association members include:
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