

September 23, 2021

RE: Call to Action- Workforce Crisis

The organizations that have signed on to this letter are asking for direct action to be taken by our elected officials and the Governor to address the escalating workforce crisis that is crippling the health and human service delivery system. The system has been chronically underfunded for years and the pandemic has now propelled it into a crisis situation, destabilizing the system and adversely affecting access to care for thousands of Rhode Islanders.

The instability of the community-based health and human service system impacts Rhode Island children, individuals with disabilities and behavioral health conditions, and elders who rely upon this workforce and the viability of the organizations that employ these workers. This industry represents tens of thousands of Rhode Island jobs that serve our most vulnerable citizens and communities.

The State has both an obligation to the Rhode Islanders who need services and a responsibility to ensure that there is a viable system in place to actually provide these services. Due to the pandemic, increased caseloads and stressful conditions have led to increased turnover, lower morale, and unparalleled levels of burnout among existing staff. Without a valued, well compensated workforce, those who rely on services will not receive them. Health and Human Service Organizations (HHS) organizations must be equipped with the tools to value the workers they employ and recruit workers back to the field of health and human services.

Children in DCYF care are at risk. We have seen the providers of service close to referrals leaving children without needed support. Children with developmental disabilities are losing critical services. We have seen this with the closure to referrals of Early Intervention (EI) providers and lack of access to therapeutic and clinical treatment supports for children with developmental disabilities and behavioral health conditions. Adults with behavioral health, substance abuse conditions, and developmental disabilities are without services that are desperately needed each day when providers are unable to accept new referrals for services. Rhode Island has an access crisis and our state leaders must respond promptly and effectively.

Fortunately, Rhode Island leaders have the financial means to address this crisis. Currently, the State of Rhode Island is the **only** state in New England that has failed to release **any American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding**¹ to the critical industries most impacted by the pandemic. Rhode Island is one of 14 states (Texas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, West Virginia, Rhode Island) that have failed to release ARPA funds.

1

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjojODMxYjI1NGMtZWQ0Ny00YzNiLTkxNjQjMTBjNDZjYTkzNzhhlwi dCI6IjM4MmZiOGIwLTRkYzMtNDEwNy04MGJkLTM1OTViMjQzMmZhZSIsImMiOjZ9&pageName=ReportSection>

[The Federal government](#)² has provided Rhode Island with the means for rescue and recovery to:

- Support urgent COVID-19 response efforts to continue to decrease spread of the virus and bring the pandemic under control
- Replace lost revenue for eligible state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments to strengthen support for vital public services and help retain jobs
- Support immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses
- Address systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the unequal impact of the pandemic
- The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds provide substantial flexibility for each government to meet local needs—including support for households, small businesses, impacted industries, essential workers, and the communities hardest hit by the crisis. These funds can also be used to make necessary investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

We ask ALL elected leaders to aggressively take action by:

1. Immediately appropriating minimally \$100 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) **and** distribution of HCBS FMAP enhanced funding to:
 - Specifically increase wages across the community based health and human service system
 - Provide appropriate funding to cover additional costs associated with operating in the pandemic
 - Initiate a robust workforce development strategy
2. Investing in sustainability planning and rate reform to:
 - Ensure the health and human service system has the capacity to meet the needs of the community
 - Ensure **all** health and human service workers receive a living wage
 - Compensate clinical and professional staff competitively

The State has the following resources to consider for investments in rescue and recovery for the health and human service delivery system. Currently the state has available the following resources to address this crisis are:

- 2021 Budget surplus (\$51.0 million)
- Home and Community Based Service Enhanced FMAP funding (\$115-\$150 million)
- ARPA Funding (\$1.2 billion)

The time to act is now. We need the help of our elected officials!

²

<https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>

ORGANIZATION	ORGANIZATION'S DISTRICT	DIRECTOR/CEO	DIRECTOR/CEO DISTRICT
AccessPoint RI	Sen 26, Rep 41	Thomas Kane CEO	Sen 26, Rep 41
Action Based Enterprises	Sen 20, Rep 51	Michael Purcell, Program Director	Rep 65, Sen 18
Adoption Rhode Island	Statewide	Darlene Allen, CEO & Executive Director	
Avatar Residential	Sen 31, Rep 26	Raymond Memery, Executive Director	Sen 31
Boys Town New England	Statewide	Sarah Galvan, Executive Director	
Child & Family of Rhode Island	Sen 10, 11, 12, 13 Rep- 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75	Marty Sinnott, CEO	Sen 12, Rep 75
Children's Friend	Sen 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 15, 16, Rep 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 13, 56, 58, 62	David Caprio, President & CEO	Sen 22, Rep 44
Community Care Alliance	Statewide	Benedict Lessing, President/CEO	
Community Provider Network of Rhode Island	Statewide	Tina Spears, Executive Director	Sen 34, Rep 36
Community Residences Inc.	Statewide	Heather Miller, Program Director	
Comprehensive Community Action Program	Sen 28, Rep 18	Joanne McGunagle, President & CEO	Sen 35, Rep 34
COVE Center	Statewide		
East Bay Community Action program	East Bay	Dennis Roy, CEO	
Easterseals Rhode Island	Statewide	Mary A. Moran, Executive Director	
Family Behavior Solutions	Statewide	Nicole Quigley, Executive Director	
Family Service of Rhode Island	Sen 6, 3, Rep 12, 2	Margaret Holland McDuff, CEO	Sen 18, Rep 66
Frank Olean Center	Statewide, Sen 38, Rep 38,37	Ruth Tureckova, Executive Director	Sen 38, Rep 37
Harmony Hill School, Inc	Sen 23, Rep 40	Eric James, CEO/President	District 23

J. Arthur Trudeau Memorial Center	Statewide	Judith A. Sullivan, President/CEO	
James L. Maher Center	Sen 12, Rep 72	Lynne Maher, Executive Director	Sen 12, Rep 72
Jammat Housing and Community Development	Sen 2, Rep 10	Stephanie Holley, COO	Sen 12, Rep 74
Justice Resource Institute	Statewide	Paige DiBiasio, Director	
L.I.F.E. Inc.	Sen 10, Rep 69	Larry Wiedenhofer, Executive Director	Rep 70, Sen
Living Innovations	Statewide	Joanne Malise, Director	
Looking Upwards	Statewide	Carrie Miranda, Executive Director	
Meaningful Outcomes	Statewide, Sen 9, Rep 27	Alicia Morgan-Nelson, Executive Director	Sen 36, Rep 33
Meeting Street	Statewide	John Kelly, CEO	
Momentum, Inc.	Statewide	Andrea Chait, CEO	
NAFI RI	Statewide	Lynn Bishop, Executive Director	
Navigate Behaviors, LLC	Statewide	Renee Randol, Executive Director	
Newport Mental Health	Newport County	Jaimie Lehane, President and CEO	
Northeast Family Services	Statewide	Peter Patch, President & CEO	
Ocean State Behavioral	Statewide	Stephen W. Patch, CEO	
Ocean Tides	Statewide, Sen 35, Rep 34	Brother James Martino, FSC	Sen 35, Rep 34
Opportunities Unlimited	Statewide	Linda N. Ward, Executive Director	
Perspectives Corporation	Statewide	Judy Niedbala, Executive Director	Sen 36, Rep 31
Phoenix Houses of New England	Statewide	Pete Mumma, President & CEO	
proAbility	Statewide	Michael Andrade, CEO	
Protect Our Healthcare Coalition	Statewide	Statewide Coalition	
ReFocus, Inc.	Statewide	Christine Kavanagh, RSM, CEO	

Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence	Statewide	Tonya King Harris, Executive Director	
Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families	Statewide, Sen 1, Rep 8	Tanja Kubas-Meyer, Executive Director	Sen 32, Rep 66
Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN)	Statewide	Sam Salganik, Executive Director	
Rhode Island Student Assistance Services	statewide	Sarah Dinklage, CEO	
Seven Hills Rhode Island	Statewide	Marissa Ruff, Interim VP	
Sojourner House	Statewide	Vanessa Volz, Executive Director	
Spurwink RI	Statewide, Sen 28, Rep 18	Regina C. Hayes, Executive Director	
St. Mary's Home for Children	Statewide	Carlene Casciano-McCann, Executive Director	Sen 7, Rep 54
The Arc of Blackstone Valley	Sen 15, Rep 62	Katherine Hunt, COO	Rep 67, Sen 32
The Arc Rhode Island	Statewide	Joanna Scocchi, Director	Rep 33, Sen 35
The Autism Project	Statewide	Joanne Quinn, Executive Director	Sen 9, Rep 26
The Corliss Institute	Statewide	Peg Graham, Executive Director	
The Fogarty Center	Statewide	David Reiss, CEO	
The Groden Center, Inc.	Statewide	Michael Pearis, CEO	
The Key Program, Incorporated	Statewide	Patricia St.Germain, Director of Operations	Sen 15, Rep 58
The Occupational & Environment Health Center of RI	Statewide	Mary Ellen DiMaio, Administrator	
The Providence Center	Statewide	Tiffney Davidson-Parker, President & COO	
The Senior Agenda Coalition of Rhode Island	Statewide	Bill Flynn, Executive Director	
The Substance Use and Mental Health Leadership Council of RI	Statewide	Susan A. Storti, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, CARN-AP, President/CEO	Sen 26, Rep 14
The Village for RI's Foster and Adoptive Families	Statewide	Sue Babin, Board President	

Thrive Behavioral Health	Statewide	Daniel Kubas-Meyer, Pres/CEO	
Tides Family Services	Kent County	Beth Lemme-Bixby, CEO	
Town of Coventry-Project FRIENDS	Rep 21, 33, Sen 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 40	Robert N. Robillard Jr., Director	
Tri-County Community Action Agency	Statewide	Joseph R. DeSantis, President & CEO	
Trinity Village, LLC	East Bay	Christine Nolan, Founder & CEO	
Turning The Corner	Sen 1, 2, 16, 23 Rep 5, 10, 11, 16, 29, 58	Lauri Smalls, Executive Director	Sen 1, Rep 5
West Bay RI	Sen 31, Rep 20	Casey Gartland, Executive Director	Sen 36, Rep 31
Westbay Community Action	Sen-27, 29, 31, 30 Rep- 20, 19, 26, 28, 21, 25, 29, 23, 27, 22, 24	Paul Salera, President/CEO	
Whitmarsh Corp	Sen 3, Rep 4	Robert LaRocco, LMFT	Sen 4, Rep 13