



To: House Committee on Finance
From: Karen Malcolm, Protect Our Healthcare Coalition
Date: March 9, 2022
Re: **SUPPORT Article 1 Section 16 Housing Investments**

The Protect Our Healthcare Coalition is a group of leading Rhode Island non-profits and consumer groups with a goal to protect and promote quality, affordable healthcare for all. The Coalition also includes hundreds of community members around the state who support the Coalition's mission.

Investments in housing are an investment in healthcare! Housing is an important social determinant of health and a critical issue directly linked to the impact of the pandemic on our state's minority communities. Sustained investment is urgent to community wellbeing and health outcomes.

- Safe and affordable homes limit exposure to COVID-19 as well as environmental toxins like lead and asthma triggers and reduce exposure to hazards such as exposed wiring; in essence, making investments in housing is an important up-front investment in health.
(<https://www.housingworksri.org/Research-Policy/Focus-Areas-Economic-Development-Health-Education/Health>)
- Affordable housing has been shown to contribute to a reduction in 'downstream' healthcare costs and to improved access to care. One study by the Center for Outcomes Research & Education (CORE) found that, "When Medicaid-covered residents moved into affordable housing they used more primary care, had fewer ED visits, and accumulated lower medical expenditures than in the year before they moved in." (<https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/resources/health-housing-exploring-intersection-between-housing-and-health-care-13360>)

Therefore, the Coalition supports making a generational investment in American Rescue Plan State Fiscal Recovery funds to catalyze increased housing production, access, and quality for low- and moderate-income Rhode Islanders.

Now is the time for Rhode Island to make the investments and policy changes that are needed to secure a future where all Rhode Islanders have access to safe, healthy, and affordable homes in the community of their choice.

Thank you.

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition partners include: Economic Progress Institute, Mental Health Association RI, RI NOW, RI Parent Information Network, RI Health Center Association, NAACP Providence Branch, United Way of Rhode Island, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU Rhode Island Council, Foster Forward, RI Coalition for the Homeless, Rhode Island Working Families Party, Upstream, Mental Health Recovery Coalition, Oasis Wellness Center, RI Community Food Bank, Substance Use & Mental Health Leadership Council, Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, HousingWorks RI, Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP), Thundermist Health Center
