



Testimony in Support of H8078 & H8079

The Ladders to Licensure Program & Health Professional Loan Repayment Program

May 1, 2024

The Latino Policy Institute would like to underscore its strong support for H8078, Ladders to Licensure Program, and H8079, Health Professional Loan Repayment Program, by Representative Tanzi. These two bills are essential to address the healthcare crisis that Rhode Island is currently facing, which, if ignored, may create deeper issues within our communities.

In November 2023, the Latino Policy Institute and the Latino Mental Health Network released the [*"Latino Mental Health Pipeline"*](#) report, which addresses the challenges Latino and multicultural mental and behavioral health providers face. Based on feedback and research on Latino providers in Rhode Island, many of our recommendations focused on supporting educational and policy investments required to help providers throughout their careers. LPI believes that we can cultivate a pipeline of skilled and culturally competent healthcare professionals by prioritizing comprehensive support systems, including educational opportunities and financial support. These investments are crucial for ensuring a diverse and resilient healthcare workforce that can effectively meet the needs of Rhode Island's diverse population.

Today, Rhode Island grapples with daunting shortages in healthcare professionals, particularly for patients from non-English-speaking or diverse backgrounds. Our support of the Ladders to Licensure Program transcends mere policy advocacy; it represents a pivotal stride towards confronting the formidable challenges besetting our healthcare landscape. This program, fostering public-private partnerships to facilitate the educational advancement and licensure of healthcare paraprofessionals, embodies a beacon of hope amid our healthcare terrain's complexities. While regrettably omitted from the Governor's final budget, we, alongside numerous healthcare stakeholders and luminaries, adamantly assert that funding and championing the Ladders to Licensure Program is not merely desirable but imperative.

Equally indispensable is our support for the Health Professional Loan Repayment Program, which allocates general revenue funds to alleviate the financial burdens of licensed healthcare professionals. Offering up to \$50,000 per individual in loan repayment assistance, this initiative beckons doctors, dentists, nurses, mental health providers, and others to commit to a minimum of two years of service at community health centers, mental health facilities, dental clinics, and other safety net establishments.

The Ladders to Licensure and Health Professional Loan Repayment Programs constitute pivotal strides toward tackling the current healthcare quagmire. The road ahead is fraught with challenges, demanding concerted efforts to redress healthcare workforce shortages and cater to the evolving needs of our diverse populace. By investing in comprehensive support systems, we can cultivate a pipeline of skilled and culturally competent healthcare professionals equipped to address the diverse needs of Rhode Island's populace.

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