



To: House Finance, Subcommittee on Human Services
From: Karen Malcolm, Protect Our Healthcare Coalition
Date: April 2, 2025
Re: **Medicaid Budget – Support Medicare-Medicaid Dual (MMP) Ombudsman Program**

The Protect Our Healthcare Coalition is a group of leading Rhode Island non-profits and consumer groups with a goal to protect, improve, and expand equitable access to quality, person-centered, affordable health care for all.

We write today to bring the Committee’s attention to the fact that the Governor’s FY26 Medicaid budget proposes to eliminate the Medicare-Medicaid Dual Ombudsman Program as of December 31, 2025.

Sustaining this program is critical. It provides assistance to people who are eligible for both Medicare-Medicaid, a population of primarily medically fragile Rhode Islanders who face significant challenges in accessing care due to their overlapping forms of coverage and high medical needs. The Ombudsman Program helps these Rhode Islanders navigate challenges and system complexities, troubleshoot eligibility, and contest claim denials. The program, housed at RIPIN, helps about 400 people every year and has saved Rhode Islanders more than \$2 million in healthcare costs since its inception in 2016 (and \$343,189 during FY24).

At a time when accessing healthcare and navigating complex systems seem only to be getting worse given the chaos and uncertainties at the federal level, we must do all we can to ensure that quality programs such as the Medicaid-Medicare Dual Ombudsman Program remain in place for the people of Rhode Island.

We urge you to appropriate an additional allocation of \$59,211 in general revenue over and above the Governor’s proposed funding level (\$118,422 all-funds) to sustain this critical program.

Thank you.

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition partners include: Economic Progress Institute, RIPIN, Mental Health Association RI, RI Health Center Association, Latino Policy Institute, Central Providence Opportunities: A Health Equity Zone (CPO-HEZ), United Way of Rhode Island, Senior Agenda Coalition RI, RI Medical Society, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU Rhode Island Council, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Leukemia/Lymphoma Society, RI Coalition for the Homeless, Rhode Island Working Families Party, Mental Health Recovery Coalition, RI Community Food Bank, RI Psychological Association, Substance Use & Mental Health Leadership Council, Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, HousingWorks RI, Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP), National Association of Social Workers RI Chapter, The Womxn Project, Advocates for Better Care