

# LEADING THE WAY ON HEALTH CARE

**Our health care system remains in dire need of help**, and we are focused on improving access and affordability for patients while easing the burdens facing providers. We have accomplished a great deal, including the creation of a committee to study the feasibility of a medical school at the University of Rhode Island, an increase in Medicaid reimbursement rates, and the prohibition of medical debt reporting to credit bureaus. We are also supporting the Governor's proposal, included in his FY26 budget, to review primary care reimbursement rates. As part of our ongoing work on health care, the following bills will be **priorities for the Senate** this session:

## PRIMARY CARE & PROVIDERS

We must make Rhode Island a more attractive place for health care providers to practice. That starts with primary care providers, but it extends across the entire continuum of care.

Doctors, not insurers, know what is best for their patients. That's why Sen. Melissa Murray is sponsoring legislation ([2025-S 0168](#)) to **eliminate prior authorization** for medically necessary care and prescriptions as determined by primary care providers, with the exception of some brand name medications and controlled substances. This will improve access to essential care for patients and address a significant burden for providers.

To expand training opportunities and encourage aspiring doctors, nurse practitioners, medical researchers, and others to study and stay here, Sen. Brian J. Thompson has introduced legislation ([2025-S 0171](#)) that will allow for Medicaid funding to **support graduate medical education programs and research** across many areas.

And to address backlogs and ensure qualified providers can more easily get to work serving patients, Sen. Peter A. Appollonio Jr. has introduced a bill ([2025-S 0170](#)) to **prevent unnecessary delays in medical licensing**.

## PHARMACIES & PRESCRIPTIONS

Pharmacies increasingly play a critical role in delivering health care services. But a range of factors, including how prescription drug costs are managed, can create serious issues for pharmacists and patients.

"Spread pricing" occurs when pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs, charge insurance payors more for a drug than they reimburse pharmacies. This is pitched as providing cost stability, but in reality, it hurts patients and pharmacies. Legislation introduced by Sen. Lori Urso ([2025-S 0165](#)) will **prohibit spread pricing** by PBMs in their cost structures, while a bill sponsored by Sen. Linda Ujifusa ([2025-S 0173](#)) will specifically prohibit spread pricing by health insurance corporations that manage Medicaid plans. These proposals will increase transparency for consumers and ensure resources are directed toward patients and pharmacies, not third-party entities.

Since the pandemic, patients and families have increasingly relied on pharmacies for services such as vaccination. Legislation from Sen. Robert Britto ([2025-S 0166](#)) will clarify state law to enable pharmacists to **administer vaccines to all eligible patients**, regardless of age.

## PATIENTS & FAMILIES

Navigating our health care system can be a time-consuming headache for patients and families. Too often, needless obstacles stand in the way of essential care, and we must work to eliminate them.

No one should face financial ruin because of illness. But medical debt can have significant long-term consequences for individuals and families. It can jeopardize people's financial security, limit their ability to buy a home or vehicle, and become a barrier to care. Sen. John Burke is sponsoring legislation ([2025-S 0172](#)) to **cap the interest rate on medical debt**, while Sen. Jacob Bissaillon has introduced a bill ([2025-S 0169](#)) to **prohibit the placement of a lien on a person's home** because of medical debt.

Unnecessary regulatory barriers should never get between a patient and their health care. That's why Senate Majority Leader Valarie Lawson has introduced a bill ([2025-S 0167](#)) to clarify existing law and **ensure the eligibility of Medicare patients for supplemental coverage programs**, regardless of their age or any pre-existing conditions.