Office of the Governor
State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
State House
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Donald L. Carcieri
Governor

Dear Fellow Rhode Islander:

Affordable health care should be within reach for all Rhode Islanders, and our health care system should be responsive, efficient, and high quality. Yet trends suggest that Rhode Island is moving further, not closer, to these goals: health care costs are rising at more than three times the rate of inflation, and four times faster than wages. We ignore these trends at great risk to the health and future of our state, and the time to act is now.

We need a common vision for our health care system—a system that focuses on health care as well as sick care, and that engages all Rhode Islanders. This system must put patients, not providers, at the center.

This ideal drives my health care agenda and five near-term initiatives that will be the focus of the State's health care reform activities:

- The Wellness Initiative
  By 2010, we will:
  - achieve the first "Well State" designation in the U.S. by the Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA), for having 20% of Rhode Island's workforce employed in WELCOA-certified "Well Workplaces"; and
  - cut in half the number of Rhode Islanders with unhealthy and unsafe habits.

- Balanced Health Care Delivery System
  By 2010, we will have a health care system with more emphasis on primary care and a balanced deployment of hospital-based and specialty care resources.

- Anywhere, Anytime Health Information
  By 2010, the majority of individuals in Rhode Island will have health information accessible electronically.

- Affordable Small Business Insurance
  By 2010, we will increase by 10,000—or 15 percent—the number of small business employees enrolled in employer-sponsored health insurance.

- Smart Public Sector Purchasing
  By 2010, we will reduce the rate of growth of the State's medical expenses by two percentage points, improve health plan performance, and use our contracts to drive changes in the health care delivery system.

These efforts address the underlying problems in the way we use, pay for, and deliver health care. Success will require collaboration, commitment, and time, and without a true spirit of public sector/private sector partnership, no meaningful progress can be made.

For three of these initiatives to succeed, the public sector will need to lead, relying on private sector principles of smart purchasing, support for small businesses, and a strong and sustained commitment to healthy lifestyles.

For two of these initiatives, the private sector must drive innovation and change, with strong public sector support. Efforts to modernize health information and strengthen our state's imbalanced delivery system must be led by the people who pay the bills.

I am committing resources and expertise from the Governor's office and State Agency leadership. I have asked Christopher Koller, the Health Insurance Commissioner, to chair a group of Agency Directors to lead this effort:

- David Gifford, M.D., Director, Department of Health
- Jane Hayward, Managing Director, Office of Health & Human Services
- Adelita Orefice, Director, Department of Labor & Training
- Michael McMahon, Executive Director, Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation
- Beverly Najarian, Director, Department of Administration

These Directors and other leading state agency personnel have been assigned to specific initiatives. They have my support and direction to collaborate with each other and with community stakeholders and to lead where appropriate. There are important existing community partnerships in these areas whose work needs to be supported by State government's participation and leadership, including the Rhode Island Quality Institute, the Worksite Wellness Council of Rhode Island, and the Rhode Island SHAPE Foundation.

Changing health care is hard, and it takes time. But like any effort that has brought Rhode Island to new heights—be it moving our rivers, cleaning our Bay, building a new airport, or moving entire highways—the hard work pays off. As we go about this work, we must remember that, at one time or another, all of us are patients in this system.

Rhode Island is a state of unique resources, and unique opportunity. Our small and manageable size and our tradition of entrepreneurship make our state ripe for piloting systemic changes or "innovation at scale." Within health care, our hospitals have a nationally noted ability to collaborate around quality improvement, and our award-winning RIte Care program is recognized as a model for affordable, sustainable Medicaid managed care.

If change can happen anywhere, it can happen here. By working together, we can carve out a path to long-term savings, increased quality, and shoring up the system to serve Rhode Island for years to come. The alternative—an expensive fragmented system that leaves more and more people uninsured and poorly served—is one that weakens our state.

Thank you for joining us in this effort. We look forward to working with you.

Donald L. Carcieri
Governor