



BLOCK ISLAND HEALTH CENTER

A Federal Rural Health Clinic

October 28, 2025

Assistant Secretary Ana Novais
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Virks Building, 3 West Road
Cranston, RI 02920

Dear Assistant Secretary Novais,

Block Island Health Services (BIHS) is pleased to express its strong support for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and the State of Rhode Island in their application for the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) funding opportunity.

As Rhode Island's only designated Rural Health Clinic (RHC), BIHS serves the residents of New Shoreham (Block Island) — the state's most rural and geographically isolated community. Located approximately 12 miles offshore, the Island must be accessed by ferry, private boat, or plane, depending on weather conditions. BIHS provides primary and urgent care services to island residents and visitors year-round, ensuring access to essential healthcare for both a permanent population and a seasonal influx of over 30,000 daily visitors during peak months.

As a proposed partner and potential subawardee under the RHTP, BIHS is committed to collaborating with EOHHS and the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) to advance several key initiatives, including:

- Supporting the development of a Rural Residency and Workforce Training Initiative to strengthen recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals in rural and remote settings.
- Partnering to assess and enhance EMS infrastructure and coordination, ensuring timely emergency response and continuity of care.
- Collaborating within our municipal town structure and community partners to identify human services supports that help residents remain healthy and independent.

Through this partnership, BIHS aims to strengthen the Island's healthcare infrastructure, expand workforce capacity, and enhance coordination among providers and emergency services, ensuring that Block Island's residents and visitors have access to high-quality, sustainable healthcare. We view the RHTP as a historic opportunity to address the longstanding challenges of delivering healthcare in Block Island. BIHS is committed to supporting the State's application and serving as a key partner in implementing Rhode Island's Rural Health Transformation Plan.

Sincerely,

NettieRose Cooley

CEO, Block Island Health Center
ncooley@bihealthservices.com
401-466-2622

Our Mission, Your Health.

6 Payne Road | Post Office Box 919
Block Island, RI 02807
(401) 466-2974 | fax: (401) 466-5476
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ADVANCING INTEGRATED HEALTHCARE

October 30, 2025

Assistant Secretary Ana Novais
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Virks Building, 3 West Road
Cranston, RI 02920

Dear Assistant Secretary Novais:

The Care Transformation Collaborative of Rhode Island (CTC-RI) is pleased to express its strong support for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and State of Rhode Island in their application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Funding Opportunity.

CTC-RI is a public-private partnership focused on improving primary care and advancing integrated behavioral health across Rhode Island. Since 2008, CTC-RI has convened state agencies, commercial insurers, health systems, and community-based organizations to strengthen care delivery, improve patient outcomes, and reduce avoidable healthcare costs. CTC-RI's collaborative model aligns with federal efforts to strengthen primary care infrastructure, expand access to behavioral health services, and support value-based care transformation.

As a proposed partner and subwardee in the RHTP grant, CTC-RI is prepared to collaborate with EOHHS and the State of Rhode Island on several key initiatives, with the goal of enhanced capacity building and infrastructure support for primary care practices. Those initiatives include:

- **Primary Care Incentive Payments for Alternative Payment Models (APMs) Reporting and Performance** which will incentivize strengthening reporting capabilities to allow for successful participation in quality-linked advanced APMs
- **Targeted Technical Assistance (TA) Program** will deliver comprehensive TA tailored to each primary care practice's needs during the transition to State-approved quality-linked primary care advanced APMs.
- **Primary Care Transformation Funds** will provide direct financial support for strategic projects that enable eligible providers to successfully implement value-based care.

We are eager to work with EOHHS to support our rural municipalities in this opportunity and look forward to continuing to serve as a key partner in the successful design and implementation of Rhode Island's Rural Health Transformation Plan.

Sincerely,



John Minichiello, MBA
Executive Director
Care Transformation Collaborative of Rhode Island

Michael Sroczyński
President



October 31, 2025

Assistant Secretary Ana Novais
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Virks Building, 3 West Road
Cranston, RI 02920

Dear Assistant Secretary Novais,

The Hospital Association of Rhode Island (HARI) is pleased to express its strong support for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and State of Rhode Island in their application for the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Funding Opportunity.

HARI is a statewide organization that assists member hospitals in effectively meeting the health care needs of Rhode Island through advocacy, representation, education and services. HARI supports its members in working collaboratively to address a wide variety of issues impacting Rhode Island's health care system, with the goal of ensuring all Rhode Islanders receive comprehensive, high-quality, cost-effective care.

As a partner in the RHTP grant and potential subawardee, HARI is prepared to collaborate with EOHHS and the State of Rhode Island on several key initiatives, including:

- **Payment Reforms that Support Financial Sustainability** will strengthen access, promote accountability and increase financial viability for hospitals. The initiative will support hospitals in transitioning to state approved alternative payment model arrangements that reward high-quality, coordinated, and efficient care.
- **Implementing Hospital at Home Program** that expands access to rural residents, delivering safe, high-quality acute-level care in patients' home as a substitute for traditional inpatient admissions. This coordinated care model integrates remote monitoring, in-home clinical visits, and 24/7 virtual supported by multidisciplinary hospital care team members.

We are eager to work with EOHHS to support rural communities in this important opportunity and look forward to continuing to serve as a key partner in the successful implementation of Rhode Island's Rural Health Transformation Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Sroczyński". The signature is written in a cursive style with a distinct flourish at the end.

Michael Sroczyński
President



NARRAGANSETT INDIAN HEALTH CENTER

Improving Health in Our Tribal Community

October 28.2025

Assistant Secretary Ana Novais
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
3 West Road, Virks Building
Cranston, RI 02920

Dear Assistant Secretary Novais,

The Narragansett Indian Tribe Department of Health and Human Services (NIT/DHHS) is pleased to express its strong support for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and State of Rhode Island in their application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Funding Opportunity Number CMS-RHT-26-001.

The Narragansett Indian Tribe (NIT) is the only federally recognized tribe in Rhode Island. The Tribe owns and operates a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), the Narragansett Indian Health Center (NIHC), which is overseen by the NIT/DHHS. The NIHC offers a variety of services to improve the health and wellness of the tribe including direct onsite medical, community health nursing, behavioral health care services and offsite Contract Health Services. Additional program components include advocacy and outreach services, injury prevention, nutrition services, prescription medications, and environmental health services.

As a proposed partner and potential sub-awardee under the RHTP grant submission, the Narragansett Indian Tribe DHHS is prepared to collaborate with the RI EOHHS on several key initiatives, including:

- **Health Infrastructure Modernization** which includes improvements in digital diagnostics and remote monitoring. NIT DHHS will modernize NIHC's clinical capacity through deployment of digital diagnostic tools and remote patient monitoring systems.
- **Workforce Development and Retention Strategies** will be implemented to strengthen stability, skills, and cultural competency across the tribal health workforce. RHTP funds will support recruitment and retention initiatives, sign-on incentives and retention bonuses for key staff, including adding a community health worker and behavioral health aide.
- **Behavioral Health and Substance Use Services** will be expanded using culturally responsive, trauma-informed, community-based models. The initiative will integrate traditional healing with evidence-based interventions to address substance use disorders, depression, anxiety, and trauma.
- **Telehealth Infrastructure** will be enhanced to include dedicated telehealth consultation area with video systems and connected diagnostic tools; integration with the EHR for scheduling and documentation; and staff and patient telehealth training.



We are eager to work with RI EOHHS to implement the Rural Health Transformation Program plan and to support the Narragansett Indian Tribe in improving healthcare access and outcomes for our tribal members.

Sincerely,

Autumn leaf Spears

Autumn leaf Spears, MHA
Director/NIT DHHS
Narragansett Indian Health Center





Assistant Secretary Ana Novais
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
3 West Road, Virks Building
Cranston, RI 02920

October 30, 2025

Dear Secretary Novais,

On behalf of the New England Rural Health Association (NERHA), I am pleased to provide this letter in support of Rhode Island's Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) proposal being submitted to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

For more than 25 years, NERHA has been the State Rural Health Association for the six New England states, with a mission of improving the health of our rural communities. We have enjoyed a particularly close collaborative relationship with the State of Rhode Island as a long-term partner and stakeholder in advancing the cause of rural health. At NERHA, we are intimately aware of the crises facing our rural hospitals, clinics, long-term care, emergency services, and the entire constellation of provider organizations who care for our underserved rural populations. Workforce shortages, inadequate reimbursement, telehealth policy, burdensome reporting requirements, and many other challenges are forcing rural provider organizations to cut services or, worse, close their doors permanently. The RHTP provides an unprecedented opportunity to address these issues by improving healthcare access, quality, and outcomes for people living in rural Rhode Island.

At NERHA, we fully support Rhode Island's vision for a transformative system of rural care that improves health outcomes for rural residents, addresses workforce gaps, and stabilizes long-term fiscal health. The infusion of financial support and, equally importantly, fresh thinking about how to deliver rural healthcare, promise to begin addressing the looming crisis in rural health. We at NERHA stand ready to help amplify and optimize the impact of RHTP funds by building on our longstanding contractual and working relationship with the Rhode Island State Office of Rural Health (RI SORH), one of our founding members. NERHA is especially dedicated to supporting RI SORH in strategically serving Rhode Island's most remote rural community on Block Island. We at NERHA have experience in working with Block Island Health Center and understand the unique pressures they face in delivering care to this rural island community. In addition, NERHA has the unique experience, relationships and capacity to coordinate multi-state RHTP collaborations as specified on page 12 of the NOFO. If such collaborative regional projects are anticipated, we are ready to work with the RI SORH to coordinate with other interested states in New England by leveraging our close relationships with all six SORHs through monthly calls and long history of collaboration.

In closing, let me reiterate our unqualified support for Rhode Island's RHTP application. We were pleased to see that, in preparing its application, the State used an extensive and inclusive process to gain input from sectors across the state including rural healthcare providers, higher education, the general population, the private sector and more. We welcome the opportunity to work with Rhode Island's State Office of Rural Health to help transform rural healthcare delivery, improve the health of Rhode Island's rural communities, and support our struggling rural healthcare providers. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide more information or assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andy Lowe".

Andy Lowe
Executive Director
New England Rural Health Association
Andy@NewEnglandRHA.org
802-324-9282



235 Promenade Street, Suite 455
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401.274.1771
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October 28, 2025

Assistant Secretary Ana Novais
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
3 West Road, Virks Building
Cranston, RI 02920

Dear Assistant Secretary Novais,

The Rhode Island Health Center Association (RIHCA) is pleased to express its strong support for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and State of Rhode Island in their application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Funding Opportunity Number CMS-RHT-26-001.

RIHCA represents Rhode Island's network of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), which provide high-quality, comprehensive care to residents across the state — including those living in our rural and underserved communities. Through this partnership, RIHCA is committed to advancing Rhode Island's efforts to strengthen access to care, modernize care delivery, and build a sustainable rural health system.

As a proposed partner and potential subawardee in the RHTP grant, RIHCA is prepared to collaborate with EOHHS and the State of Rhode Island on several key initiatives, including:

- **Developing and supporting a Rural Residency** to expand the rural primary care pipeline and strengthen recruitment and retention.
- **Advancing Primary Care Practice Transformation** by supporting FQHCs in transitioning into Alternative Payment Models (APMs) that promote care coordination, behavioral health integration, and whole-person care.
- **Providing technical assistance and capacity building for rural-serving practices** to ensure readiness for value-based care participation.

Through this work, RIHCA will help equip providers to succeed under these new models of care and ensure that Rhode Island's rural communities' benefit from a stable, resilient, and financially sustainable health care system. We are enthusiastic about this opportunity and look forward to continuing to serve as a key partner in the successful design and implementation of Rhode Island's Rural Health Transformation Plan.

Sincerely,
Elena Nicoletta
Elena Nicoletta
President & CEO
Rhode Island Health Center Association



October 29, 2025

Assistant Secretary Ana Novais
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
3 West Road, Virks Building
Cranston, RI 02920

RE: Letter of Support – Rhode Island’s Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP)

Dear Assistant Secretary Novais,

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns is pleased to express its strong support for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and State of Rhode Island in their application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Funding Opportunity Number CMS-RHT-26-001.

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns (the League) is a non-partisan organization representing all municipalities in Rhode Island, including our 18 rural communities. The League advances local legislative and policy priorities, encourages collaboration among communities and delivers resources that help municipalities thrive. We provide technical assistance, share timely information, including information about the Rural Health Transformation Program grant, and offer training and workshops to support local officials to better serve their communities.

As a proposed partner and potential subawardee in the RHTP grant, the League is prepared to collaborate with EOHHS and the State of Rhode Island on the state’s **Community Learning Center (CLC)** initiative in our rural communities. Local municipalities are creating state-of-the-art spaces in public buildings that will offer programming to help residents enhance their physical and mental health. The CLCs provide another opportunity to extend healthcare beyond traditional access points and into the community. CLC health monitoring programming includes, but is not limited to, new, private telehealth space; room for primary care and behavioral health visits; space for community paramedicine programs; and places for programs on chronic disease management.

The League is enthusiastic about this opportunity and applauds Rhode Island’s application that builds on the existing strength and resiliency of our rural citizens. We look forward to serving as a strong partner in enhancing healthcare for rural Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Randy R. Rossi".

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

October 31, 2025

Assistant Secretary Ana Novais
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
3 West Road, Virks Building
Cranston, RI 02920

RE: Letter of Support – Rhode Island’s Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP)

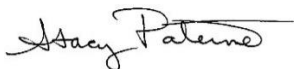
Dear Assistant Secretary Novais,

We the undersigned are pleased to express our strong support for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and State of Rhode Island in their application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Funding Opportunity Number CMS-RHT-26-001.

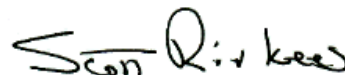
Collectively, our organizations represent a strong commitment to physical, dental and behavioral health care and access for thousands of Rhode Islanders, including those in the state’s 18 rural towns. We support the RHTP grant application for Rhode Island as it seeks to improve the ability of residents in rural communities to receive access to high-quality, comprehensive and transformative care. The RHTP plan provides innovative approaches to improve health outcomes for rural communities; enhance the healthcare workforce serving rural residents; grow and strengthen local systems; increase financial viability for providers; and modernize healthcare infrastructure.

We are enthusiastic about this once-in-a-generation opportunity for rural Rhode Islanders and look forward to serving as partners in the successful design and implementation of Rhode Island’s Rural Health Transformation Program.

Sincerely,



Stacy Paterno
Executive Vice President
Rhode Island Medical Society



Scott A. Rivkees, MD
President
Rhode Island Chapter of the American
Academy of Pediatrics



Laurie-Marie Pisciotta
Executive Director
Mental Health Association of
Rhode Island



Fotini M. Dionisopoulos, DMD
President
Executive Council
Rhode Island Dental Association



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
Department of Family Medicine

Manuel Ortiz, MPA, CAGS
Chief, Office of Primary Care and Rural Health
Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)
Three Capitol Hill, Room 410
Providence, RI 02908

To Whom It May Concern:

We write in strong support of the partnership between Thundermist Health Center and the Block Island Health Center in the development and implementation of a Family Medicine Residency Program, anticipated to launch in June 2027.

In 2023, Thundermist Health Center and Tufts University School of Medicine formed a Graduate Medical Education partnership to establish the Thundermist Health Center of Woonsocket Family Medicine Residency. This program, a Teaching Affiliate of Tufts University School of Medicine (TUSM), shares similarities with Tufts' existing "Maine Track," which immerses students in the diverse Maine healthcare landscape and deepens their understanding of rural healthcare. TUSM views the collaboration between Thundermist Health Center and Block Island Health Center as an extension of its dedication to exposing future physicians to rural health challenges and opportunities.

This residency represents an innovative collaboration between a Federally Qualified Health Center and a rural health center; both are deeply committed to training the next generation of primary care physicians to serve in rural and medically underserved communities. As one of Rhode Island's leading community health systems, Thundermist has established a robust infrastructure for graduate medical education, including its newly accredited Family Medicine Residency in Woonsocket, and brings to this partnership decades of experience in delivering comprehensive, team-based, and value-driven care.

The addition of Block Island Health Center as a key rural training site will provide residents with unparalleled exposure to the unique challenges and rewards of practicing in an island and remote coastal setting, ranging from limited access to specialty care and emergency transport logistics to broad-scope family medicine that includes urgent, preventive, and procedural care across the lifespan. The curriculum will emphasize rural health systems, telehealth integration, community engagement, and continuity of care, ensuring that residents graduate fully prepared to practice in underrepresented and resource-limited regions.

Together, Thundermist and Block Island Health Center are building a model that will serve as a national exemplar of the residency model, strengthening the rural primary care workforce and expanding access to high-quality, community-based medical education in Rhode Island.

We enthusiastically endorse this partnership and the vision it represents for the future of rural primary care. Innovative partnerships like these should be integral to states' Rural Health Transformation Program submissions to CMS, as they exemplify the type of workforce development programs needed to address rural healthcare challenges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne Altman".

Wayne Altman, MD (Chair, Tufts Department of Family Medicine)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Erlich".

Deborah Erlich, MD, MMedEd (Vice-Chair, Tufts Department of Family Medicine)