WHEREAS, The Cancer Action Network lists tobacco as the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, with cigarette smoking causing 480,000 deaths annually. Smoking costs the nation $130 billion annually in medical care costs, and more than $150 billion in lost productivity; and

WHEREAS, According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most smokers are addicted to nicotine, a drug found naturally in tobacco. More Americans are addicted to nicotine than any other drug and the center’s recent research suggests that nicotine may be as addictive as heroin or cocaine; and

WHEREAS, The CDC has also reported that approximately seventy percent of smokers want to quit smoking, and about half try to quit annually. However, less than ten percent succeed, in part because less than one-third of smokers trying to quit use proven cessation treatments; and

WHEREAS, Unfortunately, many private insurance carriers do not cover smoking cessation programs and others require high out-of-pocket costs which also reduces the number of smokers who are able to try smoking cessation programs; and

WHEREAS, The CDC recommends that all insurance programs include comprehensive coverage for all evidence-based cessation treatments, including counseling and over-the-counter and prescription medications. The CDC further recommends that all such plans include individual, group and telephone counseling, and cover at least two quit attempts per year; and

WHEREAS, Quitting smoking offers a plethora of health benefits to individuals. Quitting
smoking lowers one’s risk of getting lung cancer and numerous other types of cancer, reduces the risk of heart disease within one to two years of quitting, reduces respiratory symptoms and the risk of developing COPD, and reduces the risk of infertility for women; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations hereby respectfully requests that the Rhode Island Department of Health requires that all private insurance companies in Rhode Island cover smoking cessation programs; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Honorable Gina M. Raimondo, Governor of the State of Rhode Island, and to Director Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH, Rhode Island Department of Health.