

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

S E N A T E R E S O L U T I O N

**RESPECTFULLY URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO PASS LEGISLATION
ESTABLISHING AN IMPROVED "MEDICARE FOR ALL" SINGLE PAYER PROGRAM
THAT WOULD PROVIDE UNIVERSAL, COMPREHENSIVE AND AFFORDABLE
HEALTH CARE**

Introduced By: Senators Bell, Nesselbush, Quezada, Miller, and Seveney

Date Introduced: February 13, 2019

Referred To: Senate Health & Human Services

1 WHEREAS, Between 1991 and 2014, health care spending in Rhode Island per person
2 rose by over 250 percent, rising much faster than income and greatly reducing disposable income;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, It is estimated that by 2025, the cost of health insurance for an average
5 family of four will equal about one-half of their annual income; and

6 WHEREAS, In the United States, about two-thirds of personal bankruptcies have been
7 medical cost-related and of these, about three-fourths of those bankrupted had health insurance;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, Rhode Island private businesses bear most of the costs of employee health
10 insurance coverage and spend significant time and money choosing from a confusing array of
11 increasingly expensive plans which do not provide comprehensive coverage; and

12 WHEREAS, Rhode Island employees and retirees are losing significant wages and
13 pensions as they are forced to pay higher amounts of health insurance and health care costs; and

14 WHEREAS, Rhode Island and its municipalities face enormous Other Post-Employment
15 Benefits (OPEB) unfunded liabilities, mostly due to health insurance costs; and

16 WHEREAS, Although Rhode Island significantly expanded health care coverage for its
17 citizens under the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA), about 45,000 Rhode Islanders remain
18 uninsured, and even fully implemented, the ACA would leave 42,000 Rhode Islanders (4 percent)

1 uninsured and many more underinsured - resulting in numerous deaths per year; and

2 WHEREAS, Efforts at the federal level to repeal or defund the ACA, Medicare and
3 Medicaid further threaten the health and welfare of Rhode Islanders; and

4 WHEREAS, The United States has hundreds of health insurance carriers (i.e., multiple
5 "payers") who make our health care system unjustifiably inefficient and expensive, with about
6 one-third of every health care dollar going towards administrative costs and not towards actual
7 health care; and

8 WHEREAS, Every industrialized nation in the world, except the United States, offers
9 universal health care to its citizens under a "single payer" program and enjoys better health
10 outcomes for about one-half the cost; and

11 WHEREAS, Health care is rationed under our current multi-payer system, despite the
12 fact that Americans already pay enough money to have comprehensive and universal health
13 insurance under a single-payer system; and

14 WHEREAS, Single payer health care would establish a true "free market" system where
15 doctors compete for patients rather than health insurance companies dictating which patients are
16 able to see which doctors and setting reimbursement rates; and

17 WHEREAS, The high costs of medical care could be lowered significantly if the state
18 could negotiate on behalf of all its residents for bulk purchasing, as well as gain access to usage
19 and price information currently kept confidential by private health insurers as "proprietary
20 information"; and

21 WHEREAS, Proposed federal improved Medicare for All single payer legislation
22 introduced in the 115th Congress would have provided comprehensive coverage by substituting
23 lower amounts of increased taxes for higher amounts of premiums, co-pays, deductibles and
24 payments for amounts in excess of caps; and

25 WHEREAS, Such comprehensive coverage would have included vision, hearing and
26 dental care, mental health and substance abuse services, as well as prescription medications,
27 medical equipment, supplies, diagnostics and treatments; and

28 WHEREAS, Health care providers will benefit under improved Medicare for All single
29 payer because they will spend significantly less time with administrative work caused by multiple
30 health insurance company requirements and barriers to care delivery and will spend significantly
31 less for overhead costs because of streamlined billing; and

32 WHEREAS, There is extensive research that shows an improved Medicare for All single
33 payer program will benefit all Americans by providing universal comprehensive affordable health
34 care coverage and establishing a funding system that is public, progressive, sustainable and

1 contains health care costs; now, therefore be it

2 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
3 hereby recognizes the need for the United States government to implement an improved Medicare
4 for All single payer program and hereby respectfully urges Congress to pass single payer
5 legislation as previously introduced in Congress; and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
7 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the clerk of the United States House of
8 Representatives, the clerk of the United States Senate, and to members of the Rhode Island
9 Congressional Delegation.

=====
LC000332
=====