

2026 -- H 8365

LC006207

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH
COLLABORATION

Introduced By: Representatives Fogarty, Handy, Bennett, Donovan, Spears, Cotter,
Carson, Speakman, McGaw, and Craven

Date Introduced: March 27, 2026

Referred To: House Health & Human Services

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1.

2 Legislative findings.

3 The general assembly finds that:

4 (1) Infectious disease outbreak occurring anywhere in the world may rapidly impact the
5 health and safety of residents of Rhode Island.

6 (2) Early detection and coordinated response are essential to preventing the spread of
7 emerging infectious diseases.

8 (3) International public health collaboration networks facilitate rapid communication,
9 surveillance, and deployment of expertise during outbreaks.

10 (4) Participation by the state in such networks can enhance preparedness, training, and
11 global surveillance capacity.

12 SECTION 2. Title 23 of the General Laws entitled "HEALTH AND SAFETY" is hereby
13 amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

14 CHAPTER 106

15 INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH COLLABORATION

16 23-106-1. Definitions.

17 As used in this chapter:

18 (1) "Department" means the Rhode Island department of health.

1 (2) “Global outbreak response network” means an international collaboration of public
2 health institutions coordinated by the World Health Organization or similar international public
3 health authority for the purpose of disease surveillance and outbreak response.

4 (3) “Public health collaboration agreement” means an agreement between the department
5 and a national or international public health entity to share expertise, training, surveillance
6 information, or technical assistance related to infectious disease response.

7 **23-106-2. Authority of the department.**

8 The department is authorized to:

9 (1) Participate in international public-health collaboration network including, but not
10 limited, to the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (“GOARN”).

11 (2) Enter into public-health collaboration agreements with federal agencies, international
12 organizations, academic institutions, and public-health authorities.

13 (3) Designate a state public-health office, department of health laboratory, or program as
14 the institutional partner representing the state in such networks.

15 (4) Participate in training programs, data-sharing initiatives, and technical assistance
16 programs related to outbreak detection and response.

17 (5) Provide voluntary deployment of qualified public-health personnel where possible to
18 assist in outbreak investigations or response efforts coordinated through such networks.

19 **23-106-3. Privacy and legal protections.**

20 Participation authorized under this chapter shall:

21 (1) Comply with all applicable federal and state privacy laws.

22 (2) Protect individually identifiable health information consistent with the Health Insurance
23 Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (“HIPAA”) and state public health confidentiality
24 statutes.

25 (3) Not transfer regulatory or policymaking authority of the state to any international
26 organization.

27 **23-106-4. Coordination with federal authorities.**

28 The department shall coordinate participation in international public-health collaboration
29 networks with relevant agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, when
30 appropriate.

31 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

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- 1 This act would authorize the department of health to participate in international public-
- 2 health collaboration networks.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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