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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

JOINT RESOLUTION

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION OF THE SUM OF \$118,422 TO THE RHODE ISLAND
PARENT INFORMATION NETWORK TO CONTINUE THE OPERATION OF THE RIPIN
DUAL OBUDSMAN PROGRAM

Introduced By: Representatives Spears, Carson, Messier, Speakman, Shanley, McEntee,
Baginski, Kazarian, Cotter, and Donovan

Date Introduced: January 28, 2026

Referred To: House Finance

1 WHEREAS, The approximately 40,000 Rhode Islanders with coverage through both
2 Medicare and Medicaid, known as “dual-eligible enrollees” or “duals” are some of the most
3 medically fragile Rhode Islanders; and

4 WHEREAS, Medicare and Medicaid are poorly coordinated programs, coverage options
5 for duals are complex, and transitions in forms of coverage can have serious adverse impacts on
6 duals if significant outside assistance is not available to ensure needed medical services continue;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (“EOHHS”) had
9 established, in conjunction with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (“CMS”), a
10 dual-specific Medicare-Medicaid Plan (“MMP”) which integrated Medicare and Medicaid
11 benefits within a single plan, operated by Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island (“NHPRI”) as
12 Neighborhood Integrity, since July 1, 2016; and

13 WHEREAS, CMS withdrew support for the MMP effective December 31, 2025,
14 requiring EOHHS and NHPRI to end the Neighborhood Integrity plan and transition its enrollees
15 into a new form of coverage known as a “Fully-Integrated Dual Eligible Special Needs Plan” or
16 “FIDE-SNP”; and

17 WHEREAS, In late 2023, EOHHS issued a procurement for Medicaid Managed Care
18 services whereby awarded vendors would operate plans for duals that integrated Medicare and
19 Medicaid benefits within a single plan, but EOHHS subsequently canceled that procurement,

1 leaving the future of the managed care delivery system for duals in Rhode Island in a state of
2 confusion and flux; and

3 WHEREAS, CMS has recently promulgated proposed rules which allow for more
4 aggressive advertising of Medicare plans to enrollees including duals, while reducing
5 enforcement of fraudulent or misleading behavior by Medicare plan brokers, and reducing the
6 availability of trusted resources such as the Senior Health Insurance Assistance Programs
7 (“SHIPs”), which are expected to lead to significant confusion for duals navigating an evolving
8 and complicated menu of plans with fewer trusted resources to turn to when issues arise; and

9 WHEREAS, Approximately 11,300 duals are currently enrolled in the NHPRI FIDE-
10 SNP, and a further approximately 13,000 duals are enrolled in other dual-specific Medicare plans
11 (called “dual special needs plans” or “D-SNPs”); and

12 WHEREAS, The Rhode Island parent Information Network (RIPIN) has operated, since
13 2016, Rhode Island’s Medicare-Medicaid Dual Ombudsman Program (the “RIPIN Dual
14 Ombudsman”), which helps duals navigate complicated Medicare and Medicaid enrollment rules,
15 Medicaid redeterminations, obstacles to health plan enrollment, claim and prior authorization
16 denials, access to care challenges, provider disputes, and applications for other federally-funded
17 benefit programs; and

18 WHEREAS, The RIPIN Dual Ombudsman is funded through Medicaid administrative
19 matching with half federal Medicaid funding and half state funding, in the amount of \$236,844
20 all-funds (\$118,422 general revenue) per year, serving 467 clients in 2025, with 4,705 individual
21 client interactions, and with a 90% client satisfaction rate; and

22 WHEREAS, The RIPIN Dual Ombudsman has helped its clients save more than \$2.1
23 million in health care costs since January 1, 2018; and

24 WHEREAS, The Governor’s proposed fiscal year 2027 budget proposes to terminate
25 funding for the RIPIN Dual Ombudsman; and

26 WHEREAS, One hundred eighteen thousand four hundred twenty-two dollars (\$118,422)
27 in general revenue would leverage an additional \$118,422 in federal revenue and would allow the
28 RIPIN Dual Ombudsman program to operate at current capacity for the 2027 fiscal year; and

29 WHEREAS, Without the RIPIN Dual Ombudsman, there will be no dedicated resource to
30 assist duals, and the sunset of that program would coincide with the largest system transition in
31 the history of Rhode Island’s managed care duals delivery system; and

32 WHEREAS, Continued funding for the RIPIN Dual Ombudsman is in keeping with the
33 EOHHS's Mission Statement “to foster and strengthen a community-driven, equitable,
34 comprehensive, responsive, and high-quality health and human services system in Rhode Island”;

1 now, therefore be it

2 RESOLVED, That there is hereby appropriated, out of any money in the treasury not
3 otherwise appropriated for the fiscal year 2027, the total sum of one hundred eighteen thousand
4 four hundred twenty-two dollars (\$118,422) in general revenue to RIPIN to continue the
5 operation of the RIPIN Dual Ombudsman, with the expectation that such funds will be matched
6 by federal Medicaid funds; [with such funds to be administered by the office of the health
7 insurance commissioner;] and the state controller is hereby authorized and directed to draw their
8 orders upon the general treasurer for the payment of said sum, upon receipt of properly
9 authenticated vouchers.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
JOINT RESOLUTION
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION OF THE SUM OF \$118,422 TO THE RHODE ISLAND
PARENT INFORMATION NETWORK TO CONTINUE THE OPERATION OF THE RIPIN
DUAL OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

- 1 This joint resolution would authorize the appropriation of the sum of one hundred
2 eighteen thousand four hundred twenty-two dollars (\$118,422) to the Rhode Island Parent
3 Information Network (“RIPIN”) to support RIPIN’S continued operation of Rhode Island’s
4 Medicare-Medicaid Dual Ombudsman Program.

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