



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact**

Juan Espinoza, Communications Associate  
[jespinoza@economicprogressri.org](mailto:jespinoza@economicprogressri.org)  
401-456-2752 (office) 813-526-3043 (cell)

## Rhode Island Charts a Path Around Federal Road Blocks

Approximately 200 people attended The Economic Progress Institute's 9th annual Policy and Budget Conference, **Budget Rhode Map: Our Path Around Federal Road Blocks**. Each year, the Institute hosts a half-day conference to educate policymakers, community leaders, and interested residents about critical policy challenges and opportunities facing Rhode Island. This year's conference highlighted potential federal policy changes that may negatively impact our state, with a focus on health care and workers' rights and wages. Executive Director Rachel Flum and Board Chair Lisa Roth Blackmun welcomed participants. Governor Gina Raimondo and Senate Finance Chairman William Conley gave opening remarks.

Doug Hall, the Institute's Director of Economic and Fiscal Policy, provided an overview of Rhode Island economy from the perspective of working families, and discussed some of the legislative gains Rhode Island workers have made in recent years. Heidi Shierholz, former chief economist for U.S. Department of Labor Secretary Tom Perez and current Senior Economist and Policy Director at the national Economic Policy Institute, summarized the ways in which workers have lost ground over the past decades and provided advice on how to protect workers from emerging threats. "American workers have been getting shortchanged for a very long time" said Dr. Shierholz. "Policies that provide paid sick leave, paid family leave, and raise wages return dignity to workers and help families prosper."

Linda Katz, the Institute's Policy Director, presented an overview of health care coverage in Rhode Island, highlighting the gains in coverage for Rhode Islanders since passage of the Affordable Care Act as well as the importance of the Medicaid program to Rhode Islanders, the state's health care system and its economy. Amy Rosenthal, Director of External Affairs and Campaigns at Community Catalyst, explained the "American Health Care Act", the House's effort to "repeal and replace" the ACA and the impact the proposal would have on Americans. "We must remain ever vigilant and keep up the pressure, as members of Congress have shown their willingness to put the health and financial well-being of millions of people at risk" said Rosenthal. "Millions of Americans have made it clear they do not support changes to the ACA or Medicaid that would raise premiums, cause millions of people to lose coverage, take away consumer protections and slash state budgets. It's time for policymakers to accept that and move forward in a bipartisan way to improve the ACA, protect Medicaid and advance a health reform agenda that addresses people's most pressing concerns - lowering out-of-pocket costs, bringing down the sky-high cost of prescription drugs, addressing inequities and improving the quality of care."

"We believe in an Ocean State that ensures all Rhode Islanders have access to economic opportunities and public services that help them thrive" said Executive Director Rachel Flum. "This year's conference highlights federal threats to Rhode Islanders' economic security but more importantly outlines actions our state can take to make progress for working families: increasing the minimum wage, enacting paid sick leave, improving the TCI program and preserving quality, affordable health care."