

GOVERNOR GINA M. RAIMONDO



STATE OF THE STATE JANUARY 15, 2019

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Good evening, Speaker Mattiello, Senate President Ruggerio, members of the House and Senate; members of the Judiciary, my family – and most especially – my fellow Rhode Islanders. It's an honor to join you at the start of a new year and with so much at stake for Rhode Island and our nation. I'm humbled by the opportunity to continue serving as your Governor. My family and I are deeply grateful for your trust.

When we began our work together four years ago, Rhode Island was stuck¹ – and everybody knew it. Our unemployment rate was among the nation's highest², schools were crumbling³, and our roads were ranked the worst⁴ in the country. Rhode Island is a small and connected state so we all knew someone who was out of work. The struggle was everywhere you looked.

After spending so much time talking with so many people who had been out of work, some for over a year or more, I vowed to be the Governor who would get Rhode Island back to work⁵. Rhode Island is a place where people have always taken pride in our work, and we're proud to call Rhode Island home. So together, we shook up the old ways of doing things⁶, and brought the change needed to get back on our feet again – and to create jobs and build a bright future for our children.

As a direct result of our new approach, we went from the having the highest unemployment rate in America⁷ to now having more jobs⁸ in our state than at any time in our state's history. We went from having the worst roads in America to more road construction happening right now than at any other time in our lifetimes⁹. More Rhode Islanders are on track to

¹ On the day Governor Raimondo took office, Rhode Island ranked 49th in short term and long term growth (<http://www.governor.ri.gov/documents/press/RIconcomeback02182015.pdf>).

² Rhode Island had the highest unemployment rate in the nation for nine consecutive months from 2013-2014. On the day Governor Raimondo took office, Rhode Island had the 47th highest unemployment rate (<http://www.governor.ri.gov/documents/press/RIconcomeback02182015.pdf>).

³ *Providence Journal*, May 11, 2018: [R.I.'s problem with crumbling schools goes way beyond the urban core](#)

⁴ According to a 2018 analysis by 24/7 Wall Street, Rhode Island ranks #1 for worst infrastructure in the country, with 24.6 percent of roads and 23.3 percent of bridges in poor condition (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/economy/2018/08/13/infrastructure-spending-states-that-are-falling-apart/37270513/>)

⁵ *Providence Journal*, January 13, 2014: Outlining "bold progressive agenda," [Raimondo kicks off campaign for governor](#)

⁶ *Providence Business News*, May 15, 2017: [Raimondo approach doing one thing Chafee's didn't: create jobs](#)

⁷ *Business Insider*, January 28, 2014: [Here Are The States With The Highest And Lowest Unemployment Rates](#)

⁸ In June 2018, Rhode Island had over half a million jobs for the first time in state history. Rhode Island has now had over half a million jobs for six consecutive months (<http://www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi/ces/seasonal/2018.htm>).

⁹ <http://www.dot.ri.gov/rhodeworks/>

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graduate from CCRI than ever before¹⁰. And thousands of people are getting good jobs because we worked with employers to build new job training programs that have become a national model. We've cut taxes¹¹, regulations¹² and red tape¹³ for small businesses. And given middle class Rhode Islanders a tax cut every single year for the past four years.¹⁴ When we started, there was a freeze on school construction.¹⁵ But today, we're fixing our schools,¹⁶ and last year Rhode Islanders approved a once-in-a-generation investment to bring all of our school buildings into the 21st century.¹⁷ TF Green is thriving.¹⁸ We're the only state in America with an offshore wind farm.¹⁹ And we are number one in the nation for Pre-K.²⁰

We have stopped the decline and ignited a comeback. And it's because of you, Rhode Island – all of us – working together. We should feel proud of the work we've accomplished. **But we have so much more to do.** Our work's not done until every Rhode Islander has a shot at a good job. Until every child has a chance to attend an excellent public school - until no one who works full time is in poverty.

Let's make the decisions that will sustain our economic progress and build an economy that's strong, resilient and inclusive – one where everyone has a real chance to get ahead. Let's show that it's possible to be business friendly and fair to employees. Let's prepare people for jobs of the future. **Our world is changing rapidly,²¹ and the state of our state is strong -- and much stronger than it was four years ago. But our future depends on the decisions we make today.**

This week, I'll send to you a budget that expands our investments in job creation and job training; protects our most vulnerable; preserves our investments to finally end the opioid and overdose crisis; gives every Rhode Islander a big cut in their car tax; invests in our beautiful, cherished public parks, beaches and public spaces;^{22,23} and sets Rhode Island on a path for long-term prosperity.

When it comes to our future, nothing is more important than our children. In the past four years, we've made record investments in K-12 education, and it's starting to pay off. We've increased the number of high-quality career and technical training programs at our high schools by nearly 60 percent.²⁴ We're the only state in America to teach computer science in every public school.²⁵ And 40 percent more students are taking AP and advanced classes.²⁶

But the recent test scores are just not unacceptable. We've lagged behind our neighbors for far too long.²⁷ Let's resolve to do whatever it takes to make Rhode Island's schools competitive with our neighbors and give every single one of our children a shot at a bright future – no matter their background or their zip code.

Now, this won't be easy, and we all have a role to play, at both the state and local level. We need the courage to set an ambitious plan and stick to it despite the inevitable challenges and controversies that will come our way. We need to get even more serious about addressing our lowest performing schools and implement the highest-quality curricula in every

¹⁰ WPRI, April 19, 2018: [In first year of free college program, CCRI sees big spike in students on track to graduate](#)

¹¹ Providence Business News, July 28, 2018: [Raimondo goes to brewery and cuts taxes for small businesses](#)

¹² Warwick Beacon, October 25, 2018: [Raimondo exalts cutting 8,000 pages of business regulations](#)

¹³ Microsoft Blog, February 8, 2017: [Rhode Island's e-Permitting initiative a digital transformation success](#)

¹⁴ Since taking office, Governor Raimondo has expanded the EITC, cut the sales tax on commercial energy, eliminated the income taxes most retirees pay on social security income tax, cut the unemployment tax business pay and reduced the corporate income tax. This year will be the third year of the car tax phase out.

¹⁵ GoLocalProv, March 28, 2015: [NEW: Raimondo Makes Case for New Rhode Island School Building Authority](#)

¹⁶ RI Future, August 11, 2015: [Raimondo ends school construction moratorium](#)

¹⁷ WPRI, November 6, 2018: [RI voters back \\$250M school repair bond](#)

¹⁸ In the last two years, the number of airlines flying in and out of TF Green has from seven to 11 and the number of direct routes has jumped from 17 to 29.

¹⁹ The Block Island Wind Farm, the first offshore wind farm in the nation, broke ground in April, 2015. It supplies 30MW of clean energy to Rhode Islanders and supported over 300 jobs. Earlier this year, Deepwater Wind announced its second Rhode Island-based offshore wind project, Revolution Wind, which will create more than 800 jobs, bring in a quarter billion dollars in local investment, and supply enough energy to power half the homes in Rhode Island (<https://www.ri.gov/press/view/33345>).

²⁰ Rhode Island tied for #1 in Pre-K with several other states by hitting 10 out of 10 benchmarks on the NIEER Pre-K scorecard. http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Rhode-Island_YB2017.pdf

²¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2016: [Expect 25 years of rapid change](#)

²² Providence Journal, January 13, 2019: [Consultant says Rhode Island parks are at risk](#)

²³ A 2017 study of 22 Rhode Island parks, beaches, campgrounds and bikeways found they had 9.4 million annual visitors and \$315.8 million of spending attributed to 6.5 million non-local visitors. They produced 3,709 jobs with an economic output of \$311.9 million (<https://riepr.org/pdf/ri-state-parks-2017.pdf>).

²⁴ In 2013-2014, Rhode Island had 127 CTE programs. Today, Rhode Island has 203.

²⁵ "Last March, thanks to the Governor's leadership, Rhode Island became the first state committed to providing all young people the opportunity to learn critical thinking, logic and coding skills by offering computer science opportunities in every public school." (http://cranstononline.com/stories/meeting-the-goal-of-bringing-computer-sciences-to-our-students_120216)

²⁶ 2018 College Bound State and District Integrated Report. (<https://reports.collegeboard.org/pdf/2018-rhode-island-sat-suite-assessments-annual-report.pdf>)

²⁷ Providence Journal, October 16, 2016: [Why Massachusetts schools beat Rhode Island](#)

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school across the state, similar to how they do it in Massachusetts.²⁸ We need to support and empower teachers so they can do their best work.

And I want to thank the thousands of amazing teachers and educators who are working hard every day in the classroom, including **Amy Thompson** and **Marie Quinn**, third grade teachers for Varieur Elementary School in Pawtucket,²⁹ who are here tonight with some of their students.

Change takes time and determination. States that have been successful, like Massachusetts, have stuck with the same strategy for 25 years.³⁰ In Rhode Island, we've had a pattern of not sticking with an approach long enough to generate results.³¹ For years, we've bounced from test to test, until finally last year embracing what Massachusetts has consistently used for years. Tonight, I'm announcing an additional \$30 million in school funding.³² This funding for local communities is the single biggest increase of any part of the state budget.

Let's all step up and make the necessary changes to improve student performance.

Standing with parents and working with our dedicated teachers, we won't stop until all children can get the education they need for a bright future.

To ensure every child is set up for success, we need to start before they get to kindergarten. We know that kids who go to high-quality preschool are more likely to graduate high school,³³ more likely to get a good job and keep a good job,³⁴ and less likely to commit a crime.³⁵ Investments in Pre-K can save us money in the long-run because more Rhode Islanders will enjoy the economic benefits of a fulfilling life with a good job.³⁶ In my first term, we tripled the number of public Pre-K classes³⁷ and expanded all-day kindergarten³⁸ to every district in the state,³⁹ giving thousands of our littlest learners⁴⁰ the right start in life. It's time to do more.

Tonight, I pledge to be the Governor who brings universal public Pre-K to Rhode Island. By the time I leave office, there will be a Pre-K seat for every four-year-old whose parents want it. The budget I'll submit later this week sets us on a path to make that happen. Let's get this done.

During the last recession, three out of every four jobs lost were jobs that only required a high school degree.⁴¹ But nearly every job created since then has gone to people with a certificate or degree beyond high school. In fact, 99 percent of the jobs created since the end of the recession have gone to people with a certificate or degree beyond high school.⁴²

²⁸ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

²⁹ In September 2016, Governor Raimondo announced a goal to double the percentage of third graders reading on grade level by 2025 in the library at Varieur Middle School. In its coverage of the announcement, the Providence Journal wrote, "The governor will make the announcement at Varieur Elementary School in Pawtucket this afternoon. More than 60 percent of Varieur's third-graders met reading-level expectations last year, up 17 percentage points from the year before. Reading proficiently by the end of third grade is a leading indicator of high school graduation, according to Rhode Island Kids Count. Students who do not read at grade level are four times more likely to drop out of high school before earning a degree than those who do."

<https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20160914/raimondo-sets-deadline-for-dramatic-improvement-in-third-grade-reading>

³⁰ "In the early 1990s, the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE) spent two years producing their highly influential report, *Every Child a Winner*. Often credited with creating the intellectual framework and political impetus for the reform act (referred to herein as MERA, or the Act), the MBAE and their contemporaries, both in and out of government, established the framework under which public education in Massachusetts has operated over the ensuing two decades." <http://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/BuildingOnReform.pdf>

³¹ Between 2005 and 2017, Rhode Island changed its system of assessments three times from NECAP to PARCC to RICAS. In 2012, Rhode Island introduced a requirement that students demonstrate partial proficiency on the NECAP to graduate, but this was put on hold by the legislature in 2014. In 2016, proposed school and family empowerment legislation passed in weakened form when key provisions around school autonomy and cross-district open enrollment were removed.

³² FY19 enacted budget included \$942.7M for K-12 education. Governor Raimondo's proposed FY20 budget will include \$972.6M.

³³ <https://highscope.org/perry-preschool-project/>

³⁴ <https://highscope.org/perry-preschool-project/>

³⁵ Jack Peck, police chief of Farmington, ME and a member of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids wrote a letter to the editor highlighting research that shows high-quality Pre-K can prevent crime: The bottom line is this: Kids who participate in quality early learning programs are less likely to commit crimes when they are older. Why? Because they are more likely to gain key developmental skills early, start kindergarten ready to learn, do well as they progress through elementary, middle and high school, graduate from high school, continue their education after high school and see that life has so much more to offer them than crime. ... Another study of Chicago's Child-Parent Centers found that kids who did not participate in preschool programs were 70 percent more likely to have been arrested for a violent crime by age 18." (<https://www.pressherald.com/2018/12/16/letter-to-the-editor-pre-k-programs-pay-off-as-kids-get-older/>)

³⁶ Every dollar invested in early childhood education has a return of \$12.90 (<https://highscope.org/perry-preschool-project/>).

³⁷ [R.I. Pre-kindergarten Program set to open more classrooms, increase access for families](http://www.governor.ri.gov/newsroom/speeches/2015/budget.php)

³⁸ <http://www.governor.ri.gov/newsroom/speeches/2015/budget.php>

³⁹ *Providence Journal*, January 20, 2016: [Cranston to launch full-day kindergarten, move 6th grade from elementary schools to middle schools](http://www.governor.ri.gov/newsroom/speeches/2015/budget.php)

⁴⁰ In the current school year, there are 10,004 Rhode Islanders in all-day kindergarten classes (<http://www.erie.ri.gov/FileExchange/fredDetails.aspx?fileID=38955&download=no>).

⁴¹ <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Americas-Divided-Recovery-web.pdf>

⁴² <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Americas-Divided-Recovery-web.pdf>

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There is nothing more important to the future of Rhode Island – to the economic security of our friends and our family – than making sure that everybody has the credential or degree they need to get a good job in today’s economy. The most important factor businesses today look at when they expand is the education and talent level of the local workforce.

Given this new reality, four years ago, we changed the way we do job training. We’re partnering more closely with businesses to make sure that we’re training people for jobs that actually exist.⁴³ We’re also transforming CCRI into a workforce development engine.⁴⁴ Our approach is helping young people who are just starting out and Rhode Islanders in the middle of their careers. Already, thousands of Rhode Islanders have gotten good jobs⁴⁵ and other states are looking at us as a model for how to do effective job training. Our goal is to provide job training to any Rhode Islander who wants it. The budget I submit this week will make it easier for adults to earn a degree at CCRI, and it expands Real Jobs RI, guaranteeing job training and apprenticeships for thousands more Rhode Islanders.

Two years ago, we took an historic step and made community college tuition-free for every high school graduate.⁴⁶ Since then, the percentage of students on-track to graduate on time has nearly quadrupled.⁴⁷ Enrollment has doubled.⁴⁸ And I can’t go a week without meeting a parent or a student who stops me to say that the Rhode Island Promise scholarship has changed their family’s lives.⁴⁹

Tuition-free community college is one of the lowest-cost, highest-impact investments the State of Rhode Island has ever made. So, this year I propose an expansion of Rhode Island Promise to make the last two years of a four-year degree at Rhode Island College tuition-free.

Too many students start at RIC, but can’t finish because they can’t juggle a full course load and two or three jobs to cover tuition. The number one reason students drop out is cost.⁵⁰ Most RIC graduates stay in Rhode Island.⁵¹ They’re our teachers, our nurses, our IT technicians that keep our economy going. This small but smart investment – a few million dollars⁵² in a \$10 billion budget – will change lives, strengthen our economy and help us fulfill our obligation to ensure that every Rhode Islander can get a good job. If we do this, Rhode Island College will arguably offer the most affordable four-year degree in America. Let’s lead the way.

And before these four years are done, let’s bring Promise to our state’s flagship university, the University of Rhode Island.

To build an economy that includes every Rhode Islander, we also need to do more to propel the working poor into the middle class. Across our state, tens of thousands of people work full time, some working two or three jobs, struggle to make ends meet. Since I’ve been Governor, we’ve raised the minimum wage three times.⁵³ In the budget I submit this

⁴³ [Real Jobs RI](#) is a demand-driven, workforce and economic development initiative that is collaborative, flexible and business-led. It is designed to ensure that Rhode Island employers have the talent they need to compete and grow while providing targeted education and skills training for Rhode Island workers.

⁴⁴ CCRI reorganized to create a “Division of Workforce Partnerships” tasked with growing workforce programs, including career training and professional development for individuals and businesses. The CCRI Workforce Partnerships Team works in close collaboration with industry and business leaders to ensure the college’s offerings are meeting both current and future workforce needs.

⁴⁵ As of January 1, 2019, 4,673 Rhode Islanders have been served by Real Jobs Rhode Island (<http://www.dlt.ri.gov/realjobs/pdfs/ProgReportRJRI.pdf>).

⁴⁶ “Because of the new Rhode Island Promise scholarship program signed into law last week, Savannah’s tuition will be free. ‘It’s like hitting the lottery, really,’ Lynn Stephen said. ‘My husband is handicapped, he’s disabled, and I work full time, and I have another daughter who’s going into 11th grade, so for our family financially, it’s amazing.’” (<https://www.wpri.com/call-12-for-action/ri-just-made-community-college-free-heres-what-you-need-to-know/1044125597>)

⁴⁷ “Neves, who graduated from Middletown High School with the Class of 2017, initially thought he would pursue a career as a physical therapist, but now plans on majoring in business and earning a bachelor’s degree from URI. His experiences at CCRI far exceeded his expectations.” (<https://www.newportri.com/news/20180601/students-at-local-ccri-campus-enjoying-benefits-of-rhode-island-promise-free-tuition-program>).

⁴⁸ “Rhode Island Promise pushes you to do your best and try your best, you know what I mean?” said David Mota, a Pawtucket native aspiring towards a degree in radiology.” (http://johnstonsunrise.net/stories/ccri-triples-students-on-track-for-graduation-following-ri-promise_137231)

⁴⁹ [WPRI](#), April 19, 2018: [In first year of free college program, CCRI sees big spike in students on track to graduate](#)

⁵⁰ [WPRI](#), September 25, 2017: [CCRI enrolls 1,400 students into RI Promise Scholarship Program](#)

⁵¹ <https://www.facebook.com/GinaMRAimondo/videos/the-rhode-island-promise-scholarship-is-a-game-changer-for-ri-families-if-you-th/1431679566879537/>

⁵² [Huffington Post](#), January 16, 2018: [Why Students Drop Out of College, and How We Can Do Something About It](#)

⁵³ [A 2016 study](#) found that more than two-third of students graduating from Rhode Island College are still in Rhode Island a year after graduation, and the majority either stay in Rhode Island for their entire careers or leave for a time and return.

⁵² The FY20 budget proposal will include \$3.3 million to expand RI Promise to RIC.

⁵³ Since taking office, Governor Raimondo has raised the minimum wage three times. In 2016, the minimum wage increased from \$9.00 to \$9.60. In 2018, the minimum wage increased to \$10.10. And in 2019, the minimum wage again increased to \$10.50.

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week, I will propose another minimum wage increase to \$11.10 to keep us on pace with Massachusetts⁵⁴ and Connecticut⁵⁵ and put us on a pathway to a \$15 minimum wage.

No one who works full time should live in poverty. Work should have dignity, it should provide stability, it should give purpose.

Our new approach to economic development is creating thousands of jobs,^{56,57} and we can't take our foot off the gas. Companies big⁵⁸ and small⁵⁹ are growing here, hiring Rhode Islanders and making investments. We need to continue to make it easier⁶⁰ and cheaper⁶¹ to do business in Rhode Island.

When I first started as Governor, most other states had a small business loan fund. But we didn't. So, we started one.⁶² It provides loans to small companies – the neighborhood bakery⁶³ that outgrew its first kitchen, the local shop where you can buy a communion dress⁶⁴ for your daughter or granddaughter. Here in Rhode Island, small business is big business.⁶⁵ Over the last four years, 75 small businesses have gotten one of these loans, and they've added hundreds of new jobs and added millions to our economy. Last year, we set a goal to double the number of small business loans awarded.⁶⁶ We hit that goal.⁶⁷ So, tonight I say, let's double it again.⁶⁸

And while we are supporting our local businesses, let's remain open to new investment, new industries, and new companies. Cynicism has long been one of our worst enemies, and I'm proud that we've stood strong against cynicism. I'm even prouder of the results. Over the last four years, nearly 30 companies⁶⁹ have moved here or expanded here because of our economic development initiatives. Those companies are creating thousands of jobs that pay on average \$65,000 a year.⁷⁰

Thousands of Rhode Island families like **Nafissa Hassan**'s have economic security because of it. Two years ago, she was in a low-paying job with no opportunity to grow. She enrolled in a Real Jobs IT training program⁷¹ and got an internship with eMoney,⁷² a global company we brought to Rhode Island because of our new business programs. Today, Nafissa is an associate engineer at eMoney earning a good, family-supporting paycheck. And she promises me that she's not done climbing.

A healthy economy also requires a healthy workforce. No one can be a good employee or do well in school if they aren't healthy. And no one should go bankrupt because of medical bills or panic when their kid gets sick because they can't afford the bill. The Affordable Care Act is working in Rhode Island. It's working better here than in nearly every other

⁵⁴ Effective Jan. 1, 2019, the Massachusetts minimum wage is \$12 per hour (<https://www.mass.gov/minimum-wage-program>).

⁵⁵ Connecticut's minimum wage currently stands at \$10.10 per hour. Governor Lamont has pledged to continue raising Connecticut's minimum wage over the next four years (<http://www.hartfordbusiness.com/article/20181023/NEWS03/181029993/ct-gubernatorial-debate-heats-up-around-minimum-wage>).

⁵⁶ Since January 2015, when Governor Raimondo was sworn in, Rhode Island has created 19,300 jobs (<https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag-ri.htm>).

⁵⁷ Commerce Corporation's programs, including the Qualified Jobs Initiative and Rebuild RI Initiative, have yielded 15,800 direct jobs.

⁵⁸ *Providence Journal*, May 3, 2018: [Electric Boat credits R.I. actions for creating 1,300 jobs](#)

⁵⁹ *Rhode Island Monthly*, November 8, 2018: [Frog and Toad Expands to the West Side of Providence](#)

⁶⁰ [Governor Raimondo Announces Largest Successful Regulatory Reform Effort in State History](#)

⁶¹ *Johnston Sunrise*, December 21, 2017: [Raimondo announces unemployment insurance tax cut](#)

⁶² *Providence Journal*, June 23, 2017: [Trouble getting a small-business loan? R.I. program fills that gap](#)

⁶³ [Sin Bakery](#) is a coffee shop, dessert bar and custom cake shop.

⁶⁴ [Piccolo](#) is a new and unique children's boutique conveniently located on Route 114, across from the Barrington Town Hall.

⁶⁵ 98.9 percent of Rhode Island businesses are small businesses. Small businesses employ over 224,000 Rhode Islanders – 52.7 percent of the state workforce (<https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/2018-Small-Business-Profiles-RI.pdf>).

⁶⁶ <http://www.governor.ri.gov/newsroom/speeches/2017/state-of-the-state.php>

⁶⁷ The following 75 businesses have been helped by Rhode Island's small business loan program: The Capital Good Fund; Cool Air Creations, Inc; Copper Cool, Inc; Laughing Gorilla, LLC; Hair on Mane; KJMJ-Med, LLC; Ocean State Embroidery; Cast, LLC; M Lapris Logging& Firewood; Specialty Hearth Products; Universal Cleaning; Rodrich Landscaping; East Coast Construction; 2nd Story Theatre; Blue Fin Capital Inc; Atlantic Marine Construction; JW Cook-Cumberland Well and Pump; Sarah Insurance; Capital Good Fund; Ephraim Doumato Jewelers; Dan's Oil Company; Dr. Caroline Chang; Ocean State Kidz Club; Starfish Enterprises LLC; Berganza Roofing; RI Mushroom Company; Meridian Printing; Night Vision; Becker Manufacturing d/b/a Garland Pen; Shaidzon Liquors; Atlantic Beach Park, Inc.; Fertav; Latinamerica Distributors, Inc; A. Macari Construction; Anchor Health and Performance; Bileau Built; Daily Wicthal; Riffraff Book Store and Bar; The Family Cake; Lockstar Beauty Bar; CocoFuel; Rhode Island Organics; Sweet Victory Aquaculture; Piccolo; Raymonds Brother Tailor Shop and Laundromat (two loans); Casa Mexico (two loans); Sin Bakery; Mobile Quest; Support Vision; Justin Kerr Design; The Walker School of Allied Health; Salted Slate; Carmen & Ginger; A. Macari Construction; Skye Gallery; Jounce Fitness; Rachyl's Goat Milk Soap LLC; October; Kindred Community Acupuncture; RCM Cleaning; Enjoyful Foods; Le Central; Saki's Pizzeria; Machupicchu Restaurant; Kendall Reiss, LLC; Chessawanock Island Oysters, Inc.; P&E African Market; Bow Chika Wow Town; Lou's Cafè; Feast and Fettle; Bay Business Machines; Sphere-E; and Hands in Harmony.

⁶⁸ The Governor will propose funding this year and the years ahead to provide these loans. The FY20 budget Governor Raimondo will propose will include approximately \$750,000 for the small business loan fund.

⁶⁹ <https://commerceri.com/tax-credits-and-financing/>

⁷⁰ The Qualified Jobs initiative and RebuildRI have combined to create 15,800 direct jobs and have generated a combined \$864 million in additional GDP for Rhode Island.

⁷¹ <https://www.techhiringri.org/>

⁷² <https://commerceri.com/tax-credits-and-financing/qualified-jobs-incentive-emoney/>

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state. Since I've been Governor, we've cut our uninsured rate by roughly half,⁷³ nearly all Rhode Islanders have health insurance, and health insurance premiums on our exchange are some of the lowest in America.⁷⁴

But Washington's constant attacks on the ACA⁷⁵ put all of that at risk. Rhode Islanders with pre-existing conditions and thousands of families who count on the ACA for coverage have a target on their back. We have to take action to protect them and preserve their health care. Let's pass legislation this year that protects the Affordable Care Act in Rhode Island. And let's take steps to lower premiums and reduce insurance costs for people and small businesses.

And while we are talking about health care, let's make this the year we codify women's access to reproductive health care here in Rhode Island.⁷⁶

If we fail to protect health care, our economic recovery will be on life support.

And again this year, I am asking that we continue to be a national leader in expanding access to mental health care for all Rhode Islanders.⁷⁷ Last year, I met privately with small groups of teachers to ask them what it's like to be an educator in America today. In every single meeting, the number one concern they raised was their students' mental health. If our kids are going to succeed and reach the high standards we have for them, then we really need to meet all of their needs today.

This year, we will launch a new initiative to address mental health in our schools.^{78,79} We're going to make sure that kids can have access to health care for their anxiety and depression just as they do for a broken arm or the flu. The budget I'll introduce this week will also include funding⁸⁰ to provide educators with the training they need to support their students' mental health needs. Today's kids are struggling with mental health issues far more than we did.⁸¹ And as a mom, I can see why. We didn't grow up with the pace or pressure or technology our kids have today.

And sadly, our kids are growing up in a country where they have to worry about gun violence. Across the country, 100 people are killed every day by a firearm.⁸² And since 2015, I've ordered our flags to half-mast 13 times because of a mass shooting.⁸³ The plague of gun violence is one of the most disturbing and preventable public health crises of this generation. Last year, we passed a red flag law⁸⁴ and banned bump stocks.⁸⁵ And I'm deeply thankful to the legislature and advocates for your help to get that done. But we didn't finish our work. This year let's ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and let's ban guns in schools.

⁷³ In 2013, Rhode Island's uninsured rate was 11.6%. The following year the rate was 7.4%. The Health Insurance Survey conducted in 2018 shows an uninsured rate of 3.7%. (<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>)

⁷⁴ In 2014, Rhode Island had the 37th lowest average benchmark premium in the country. Today, Rhode Island has the third lowest in the country, and last year Rhode Island had the lowest in the country. (<https://www.kff.org/health-reform/state-indicator/marketplace-average-benchmark-premiums/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22collId%22:222019%22,%22sort%22:asc%22%7D>)

⁷⁵ Newsweek, October 16, 2018: [Trump Administration Attack on Obamacare Will Cause Premiums to be 16 Percent Higher: Report](#)

⁷⁶ <https://www.ri.gov/press/view/33766>

⁷⁷ Governor Raimondo signed an executive order in May 2018 directing the following actions: ensure parity for physical healthcare and behavioral healthcare services; convene state agencies to develop strategies for improving behavioral healthcare in RI; and launch a statewide conversation on mental health. The Governor included funding in her 2018 budget for BH Link, the state's first behavioral health crisis center, which opened in November. She also sponsored legislation during the 2018 legislative session that prohibits insurers from charging higher fees for routine behavioral health visits and ensures OHIC has the authority to take appropriate actions in support of advancing behavioral health parity (this legislation passed both houses and was signed into law in 2018). As a result of the administration's efforts to ensure parity of mental and physical healthcare services, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island has agreed to extensive changes to behavioral health care service authorization, impacting hundreds of thousands of Rhode Islanders, and has invested \$5 million with the Rhode Island Foundation to support behavioral health prevention activities. In 2018-19, Rhode Island received commitments of federal grant funds totaling \$22.5 million to support improving behavioral healthcare for children.

⁷⁸ Last year, Governor Gina M. Raimondo and the Rhode Island Congressional delegation announced a \$9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to support stronger mental and behavioral health services for Rhode Island students. This five-year grant, with a \$1.8 million annual allocation, will impact nearly 40,000 students in the three pilot communities, where RIDE and DCYF will work with the districts and with community partners to increase awareness of mental health issues, provide training for school personnel, and connect students and families with the mental and behavioral health services they need. (<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/AdditionalInformation/News/ViewArticle/tabid/408/ArticleId/506/Rhode-Island-Awarded-9-Million-to-Support-Mental-Health-Services-for-Students.aspx>)

⁷⁹ BHDDH received a *Promoting the Integration of Physical and Behavioral Healthcare* (PIPBHC) grant in the amount of \$10 million. BHDDH received notification of the award on December 26, 2018. A more formal press announcement of this grant is planned for early this year.

⁸⁰ In addition to a sizeable federal grant, Governor Raimondo's FY20 budget proposal will include \$590,000 in state funding to support mental health training for teachers.

⁸¹ *Washington Post*, May 10, 2018: [Why kids and teens may face far more anxiety these days](#)

⁸² <https://everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-america/>

⁸³ Since taking office, Governor Raimondo has lowered the flags for 13 mass shootings that collectively killed 223 individuals: Thousand Oaks, 2018 (12 killed); Tree of Life, 2018 (11 killed); Capital Gazette, 2018 (5 killed); Santa Fe, 2018 (10 killed); Parkland, 2018 (17 killed); Sutherland Springs, 2017 (25 killed); Las Vegas, 2017 (58 killed); Baton Rouge, 2016 (3 killed); Dallas, 2016 (5 killed); Pulse Nightclub, 2016 (49 killed); San Bernardino, 2015 (14 killed); Oregon Community College, 2015 (9 killed); Chattanooga, 2015 (5 killed).

⁸⁴ Rhode Island Gov. Gina Raimondo signed an executive order establishing a statewide 'red flag' policy to help keep guns away from people 'who pose a danger to themselves and others.' Rhode Island becomes the sixth state to take the action and the first since the Feb. 14 shooting rampage at a Florida high school that claimed the lives of 17 students and staff. (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/02/27/rhode-island-red-flag-dangerous-gun-owners/376158002>)

⁸⁵ Democratic Gov. Gina Raimondo signed the bump stock ban bill as well as a 'red flag' bill, which will allow law enforcement to request orders to remove guns temporarily from people it deems dangerous. 'There's no question that we need these laws, there's no question that it's common-sense, and no question that they'll make us safer,' Raimondo said in a ceremony at the statehouse. (<https://www.wpri.com/politics/raimondo-signs-red-flag-bill-bump-stock-ban-into-law/1212710745>)

⁸⁶ *The Hill*, June 1, 2018: [Rhode Island gov signs law banning bump stocks](#)

GOVERNOR GINA M. RAIMONDO
2019 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS
JANUARY 15, 2019

It's time. We can't sit back and deny a generation of Rhode Islanders their right to safe schools and safe communities. Later this month, I will submit a comprehensive package of gun safety reforms that we know will save lives.⁸⁶ Rhode Islanders overwhelmingly⁸⁷ support⁸⁸ stronger gun laws. Let's pass these bills this year.

In the end, our efforts to strengthen gun laws, to end the overdose crisis, to protect health care, to expand job training, to support businesses and provide our children with a world class education are all about one thing: the future.

We can profoundly shape and strengthen the state we pass down to our kids. The decisions we make, the actions we take, the tone we use, all have the potential to be lasting and impactful.

Years from now, we'll look at the state that we've passed down to our children. If, and only if, we've made good on our promise to leave no one behind; If, and only if, we've actually delivered economic opportunity for all; If, and only if, Rhode Island is the place where if you work hard you really can get ahead ... Then – and only then – can we say we were successful.

I think we're up for it.

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless Rhode Island.

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⁸⁶ In 2018, Governor Raimondo formed a Gun Safety Working Group tasked with developing recommendations to keep Rhode Island safe. The Working Group's [final report](#), released in October, included many recommendations for common sense gun reform, including proposals to strengthen mental health resources in schools, prohibit concealed-carry weapons on school grounds, ban high-capacity magazines, strengthen our permitting laws, and improve statewide data collection on firearms.

⁸⁷ WPRI, May 19, 2016: [Poll: Rhode Islanders want stricter gun laws](#). According to a 2016 poll by Princeton Research Associates, 82 percent of Rhode Islanders support limiting concealed guns in elementary schools to law enforcement officers and 75 percent support capping magazines at 10 rounds.

⁸⁸ Rhode Islanders' strong support for stricter gun laws has remained constant over the years. A 2018 poll by WPRI/RWU showed that 60 percent of Rhode Island voters support enacting a state law which would make it illegal to sell or possess semi-automatic rifles such as the AR-15 (<https://www.wpri.com/news/eyewitness-news-investigates/wpri-12-rwu-poll-ri-voters-back-daca-immigration-program-ar-15-ban/1082560889>).