



TOWN OF EXETER, RI

TOWN COUNCIL

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**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
TOWN OF EXETER**

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-01

**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING HEALTHCARE ADVOCACY AND FAIR
REIMBURSEMENT TO PRESERVE LOCAL ACCESS TO CARE**

WHEREAS: South County Hospital is a 100-bed, full-service community hospital and the only independent hospital in the State of Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS: South County Health, as a locally governed, nonprofit, mission-driven health system, includes South County Hospital, South County Medical Group, and South County Home Health, and serves as one of the largest employers in Washington County with more than 1,500 employees; and

WHEREAS: South County Health provides essential healthcare services to residents of Exeter and surrounding communities, ensuring access to emergency care, maternity services, oncology, primary care, specialty care, and home health services close to home; and

WHEREAS: South County Health annually provides more than 250,000 outpatient visits, 28,000 emergency department visits, 46,000 Express Care visits, 6,000 surgeries, 700 births, and 62,000 home health visits, reflecting its critical role in the regional healthcare infrastructure; and

WHEREAS: South County Hospital is nationally recognized for quality, safety, and patient experience, including receipt of the 2025 Healthgrades Outstanding Patient Experience Award, placing it in the top 15 percent of hospitals nationally and the highest-rated hospital in Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS: South County Health has made significant investments to expand access to care, including growth in primary care, women’s health, and oncology services, reassignment of thousands of patients to primary care providers, and expansion of cancer care services across the region; and

WHEREAS: South County Health has entered into a Letter of Intent for a transformational partnership designed to enhance long-term sustainability while preserving its nonprofit status, independence, local governance, and commitment to keeping funds raised in South County permanently within South County; and

WHEREAS: Rhode Island's healthcare delivery system is widely recognized as being in crisis, driven by more than two decades of reimbursement rates that are significantly lower than those in neighboring states, with hospitals and providers in Massachusetts and Connecticut receiving approximately 20 to 30 percent higher reimbursement; and

WHEREAS: Rhode Island currently receives the lowest private commercial and Medicare reimbursement rates in all of New England, contributing to hospital bankruptcies, acquisitions, service reductions, and closures, as well as widespread difficulty accessing primary and specialty care; and

WHEREAS: More than 300,000 Rhode Islanders lack a primary care provider, wait times for care can extend six months to a year, and Rhode Island has been ranked among the worst states in the nation in which to practice medicine, with approximately one-third of physicians at or near retirement age; and

WHEREAS: Inadequate reimbursement has contributed to a growing trend of healthcare services leaving Rhode Island, including the relocation or reduction of maternity, oncology, and inpatient services, further threatening access to care for residents of Washington County and Exeter; and

WHEREAS: Independent community hospitals such as South County Hospital are essential to maintaining local access to care, supporting the regional workforce, preserving emergency and specialty services, and ensuring long-term healthcare stability for Rhode Island communities; and

WHEREAS: Municipal advocacy resolutions play an important role in communicating community priorities to state policymakers and reinforcing the need for sustainable healthcare policy solutions;

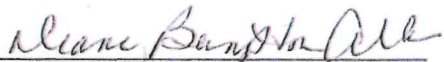
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That the Town Council of the Town of Exeter, Rhode Island, hereby expresses its strong support for policies that promote fair and sustainable healthcare reimbursement in Rhode Island; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Town Council supports legislative and regulatory efforts aimed at achieving reimbursement parity with neighboring states in order to stabilize Rhode Island's healthcare system, recruit and retain healthcare providers, and preserve local access to care; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Town Council recognizes and affirms the vital role of South County Hospital and South County Health in serving the residents of Exeter and Washington County, and supports efforts to maintain its independence, local governance, and long-term sustainability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk is directed to forward a copy of this resolution to Rhode Island Governor Daniel McKee, the President of the Rhode Island State Senate, the Speaker of the Rhode Island House of Representatives, the State Senator and Representatives of the Town of Exeter, and all City and Town Councils.

Approved by vote of the Exeter Town Council on this 9th day of March, 2026.



Diane Bampton Allen
Town Council President

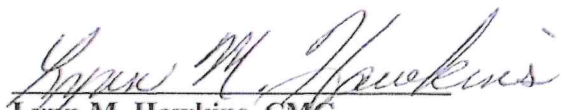

Raymond A. Morrissey, Jr.
Town Council Vice President


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Town Council Member


Joseph M. Turner
Town Council Member


Calvin A. Ellis
Town Council Member

IN WITNESS HEREOF, I hereby set my hand and the Official Seal of the Town of Exeter this 9th day of March, 2026.


Lynn M. Hawkins, CMC
Exeter Town Clerk