

Ribbon-cutting celebrates completion of 150 Richmond, new Life Sciences building

PROVIDENCE — Governor **DAN MCKEE** was joined Oct. 17th by representatives of the 195 District and numerous dignitaries to mark the completion of the 150 Richmond building with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting. The 212,000-square-foot life sciences development is anchored by the new Rhode Island Department of Health State Laboratories. The seven-story building was developed by Legal & General, designed by HOK, and constructed by Dimeo Construction. The building is the eighth building to be completed in the 195 District.

Attendees included U.S. Senator **JACK REED**, U.S. Senator **SHELDON WHITEHOUSE**, U.S. Representative **GABE AMO**, RI House Speaker **K. JOSEPH SHEKARCHI**, and RI State Senate President **VALARIE LAWSON**.

Also included in the speaking program were **MARC CRISAFULLI**, Chairman of the I-195 Redevelopment District Commission; **STEFAN PRYOR**, Secretary of Commerce; **DR. GLEN GALLAGHER**, State Health Lab Director; **DR. MARK TURCO**, President & CEO of RI Life Science Hub; and **CAROLINE SKUNCIK**, Executive Director of the 195 District.

Serving as an anchor tenant, the State Health Laboratories provides a larger, more modern, and technologically advanced workspace than the former lab building. This updated space

Richmond Street was financed by an \$81.7 million Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In addition to the state health laboratories, the building will house Ocean State Labs, Rhode Island's first life science incubator. Powered by Portal Innovations, with financial support from the RI Life Science Hub, the 195 District, and Brown University, Ocean State Labs recently announced the first five start-up companies that will be housed in the incubator when it opens in early 2026.

"The staff at the State Health Laboratories work every day to keep Rhode Islanders and their communities healthy and safe," said **DR. JERRY LARKIN**, Director of the Rhode Island Department of Health. "This much-needed modern facility will help us better serve Rhode Islanders, perform cutting-edge laboratory science, and quickly respond to emergencies and other public health events. We are incredibly grateful to the CDC, our Congressional Delegation, and all our laboratory staff for helping turn our vision for state-of-the-art labs into a reality and solidify Rhode Island's position as a leader in public health and scientific innovation."

"This facility is more than just a building – it's a bridge between public health and innovation," said Dr. Turco. "By uniting the Rhode Island Department of Health with a first-of-its-kind life sciences incubator, we're creating a space where discovery becomes impact. It reflects the power of collaboration across government, academia, and industry – driving growth, attracting talent, and positioning Rhode Island as a rising leader in life sciences."

"150 Richmond is our latest addition to a thriving 195 District that has put Rhode Island on the map for the life sciences industry," said Gov. McKee. "Not only do the new State Health Laboratories provide the ideal environment for our researchers at the Rhode Island Department of Health, but the life science incubator and available business spaces in the building set the stage for exciting public-private collaborations in the future."

150 Richmond is a public-private partnership. Several state partners collaborated to bring the project to fruition, including the 195 District, Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, Rhode Island Department of Administration, Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and Rhode Island Department of Health. ❖



Governor Dan McKee, with representatives of the 195 District and dignitaries, at the ceremonial ribbon-cutting held in October to mark the completion of the 150 Richmond building.

will provide the State Health Laboratories with the flexibility needed to quickly respond to emerging threats and apply cutting-edge new technologies, such as the expanding field of genome sequencing. From testing for infectious diseases to working with law enforcement, and monitoring the safety of our air, food, water, and beaches, the Rhode Island Department of Health State Health Laboratories provides critical services to keep Rhode Islanders healthy and safe.

Like the former location, the new building also includes a highly secure Biosafety Level 2 and 3 facility equipped to safely perform environmental, forensic, chemical, and biological testing. Construction of the State Health Laboratories at 150

VeinTech announces opening of U.S. headquarters in Providence

Perth, Australia-based expanding to U.S. with support of grant from the Rhode Island Life Science Hub

PROVIDENCE & PERTH, AUSTRALIA — VeinTech, a MedTech innovator transforming vascular access, announced the opening of its first U.S. office at CIC Providence. The launch was celebrated during Rhode Island Startup Week's Health & Life Sciences Day on September 22, underscoring the state's emergence as a hub for health innovation and economic growth.

VeinTech's U.S. expansion is fueled by a \$750,000 Rhode Island Life Science Hub (RILSH) grant, which has accelerated the company's entry into the U.S. market and enabled new collaborations with multiple local partners. From its roots at Perth Biodesign in Australia to support from NEMIC (New England Medical Innovation Center) in Providence, VeinTech's journey reflects the power of international collaboration and Rhode Island's growing life sciences ecosystem.

"VeinTech's decision to establish a U.S. hub in Rhode Island is a powerful signal of the strength and momentum of our life sciences ecosystem," said **MARK TURCO, MD**, CEO of the Rhode Island Life Science Hub. "By tackling one of healthcare's most widespread procedural challenges, VeinTech is showing how cutting-edge MedTech companies can drive both better outcomes for patients and new opportunities for economic growth. Their presence underscores why

Rhode Island is becoming a destination for life sciences innovation."

"With the support of RILSH, NEMIC, and our partners, we are thrilled to establish VeinTech's U.S. headquarters in Providence," said **DR. NIKHILESH BAPPOO**, CEO of VeinTech. "IV insertion is performed over a billion times each year, yet nearly half of those attempts fail on the first try. Our mission is to change that with VeinWise – giving every clinician the confidence to get it right the first time, and improving the experience for patients everywhere. Rhode Island offers the talent, resources, and partnerships we need to deliver on that vision."

Driving Partnerships, Jobs, and Skills

Since receiving the RILSH grant, VeinTech has launched collaborations with local companies in product design, quality, regulatory, manufacturing and market access and is now seeking partnerships with clinical sites and nursing schools for upcoming validation studies.

Talent investment is central to VeinTech's growth. The company recently announced the appointment of **MICHAEL PEREIRA**, a veteran medical device industry operator who formerly served as COO of Beta Bionics and Ximedica, as Chief Operating Officer. VeinTech has also formed a cross-Atlantic scientific

partnership in Galway, Ireland through the appointment of Scientific Advisory Board Chair, Associate Professor Peter Carr, who joins the leadership team.

VeinTech will soon announce an incoming Chief Commercial Officer and is hiring additional staff and consultants in Rhode Island. The company is also partnering with the Rhode Island Life Sciences Workforce Development Partnership to create internships and training pathways for local students and early-career professionals.

VeinTech recently presented its most recent clinical data at the Association for Vascular Access Conference in Orlando, demonstrating a strong potential use case in cancer centers and validating the technology in twelve patients. The company shared strong performance data indicating its ability to find "hidden veins" whilst enabling selection of higher-quality veins and sites that last longer, avoiding fragile hand veins or elbow creases prone to complications.

With this clinical momentum, VeinTech has now secured half of its upcoming \$2.5M capital raise including \$750K in non-dilutive funding from Rhode Island ahead of the round opening, to accelerate commercialization and U.S. market entry. ❖

AMA launches Center for Digital Health and AI

CHICAGO — The American Medical Association (AMA) recently announced the launch of its Center for Digital Health and AI, a new endeavor created to put physicians at the center of shaping, guiding, and implementing technologies transforming medicine.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and digital health tools are advancing rapidly, but without physician leadership and input, they risk creating unintended burdens and failing to reach their full potential. The new Center will tap the full potential of AI and digital health by embedding physicians throughout the lifecycle of technology development and deployment to ensure it fits into clinical workflow and physicians know how to utilize it.

“Augmented Intelligence will be a defining force in the future of health care, but right now we are barely scratching the surface of its potential. Digital health tools are everywhere and the technology has limitless opportunity, but if you don’t understand clinical practice or clinical workflow, even the best tools will never be fully implemented,” said AMA CEO & Executive Vice President **JOHN WHYTE, MD, MPH**. “By launching this Center, the AMA is leading in this space so physicians have a say in the technology and clinical care of the future. Our goal is to harness innovation responsibly and effectively, so it improves patient care and reduces unnecessary burdens on physicians.”

The Center for Digital Health and AI will focus on:

- **Policy and regulatory leadership:** Working with regulators, policymakers, and technology leaders to shape benchmarks for safe and effective use of AI in medicine and digital health tools.
- **Clinical Workflow Integration:** Creating opportunities for doctors to shape AI and digital tools so they work within clinical workflows and enhance patient and clinician experience.
- **Education & training:** Equipping physicians and health systems with knowledge and tools to integrate AI efficiently and effectively into practice.
- **Collaboration:** Building partnerships across the tech, research, government, and health care sectors to drive innovation aligned with patient needs. ❖

AMA, Ad Council and Coalition of Health Care Leaders launch new effort to prevent firearm injuries

CHICAGO, IL — With firearm injuries the leading cause of death of children and teens in the U.S., the American Medical Association (AMA) and the Ad Council, in collaboration with a coalition of health care leaders, launched a new digital resource hub at AgreeToAgree.org/HealthCare to empower physicians and other health care professionals to confidently and compassionately engage patients in conversations about firearm injury prevention. The digital resource hub features new “Agree to Agree” campaign videos, fact sheets, toolkits, and conversation guides for clinicians to help patients and their families understand the risks associated with unsecured firearms and best practices for secure storage to help reduce injuries and deaths.

The AMA, along with many national medical specialty societies, supports counseling patients on preventing firearm injuries. However, due to numerous barriers, this topic remains largely absent from clinical conversations – 86% of adults say they have never been asked by a physician whether there are firearms in the home. Yet studies show that when these conversations do occur, patients are more likely to adopt safe storage practices. The new digital resource hub and “Agree to Agree” campaign videos aim to close this gap by equipping clinicians with the tools and confidence to address this issue with their patients.

“In cities and towns – rural and urban – physicians treat patients and families afflicted by firearm injuries every day. To help reduce injuries and deaths, we must focus on prevention,” said **TOLUWALASE A. AJAYI, MD**, AMA Board Chair-elect and AMA Firearm Injury Prevention task force Co-Chair. “That’s why we’re providing resources to help health care professionals feel confident in talking with patients about firearm safety. We encourage physicians to include questions about firearm ownership and secure storage practices as part of routine patient care and child well visits, just as we ask about pool safety and car safety seats. Doing so will normalize conversations on this topic and save lives.”

The digital resource hub is a product of the AMA’s Firearm Injury Prevention task force, which launched in 2023 and includes representation from 14 national medical specialty societies and several liaison organizations. The hub includes content from the AMA, medical associations, health systems, academic institutions, medical journals and non-profit organizations. It allows users to select tools both by clinical specialty and by risk area, as well as the ability to see which content offers continuing education credits.

This work is part of the newest phase of the Ad Council’s “Agree to Agree” campaign – a national effort to empower health care professionals to confidently and compassionately engage patients in conversations about firearm injury prevention.

In addition to the digital resource hub, “Agree to Agree” is introducing a new PSA encouraging physicians and other health care professionals to feel confident as they approach conversations about firearm injury prevention. The PSA brings to life real-world scenarios that reflect the nuanced, everyday moments in clinical care, like nutrition, limiting screen time, car safety seat use, and protecting kids from household hazards. The PSA directs audiences to AgreeToAgree.org/HealthCare to find the resource hub, developed in collaboration with the AMA for clinicians to learn more. ❖

Senate commission feasibility study finds URI ‘well-positioned’ to launch medical school

KINGSTON — A Rhode Island Senate special legislative commission charged with studying Rhode Island’s health care workforce and issues related to the state’s primary care crisis met in October to hear public testimony regarding the prospect of creating a medical school at the University of Rhode Island.

In advance of the public hearing, the commission released an independent feasibility study that found establishing a medical school at URI is “both viable and necessary to meet the state’s pressing healthcare needs.” The 21-member commission was appointed in July 2024 by late Senate President **DOMINICK J. RUGGERIO**, and is chaired by Senator **PAM LAURIA** and URI President **MARC PARLANGE**. The independent study, conducted by consulting firm Tripp Umbach, a nationally regarded firm with leadership in economic impact studies and consultation services for academic medical campuses and medical schools, was commissioned in February 2025 following a competitive process.

“As the state’s flagship public research university, we are committed every day to advancing our state and enhancing the quality of life for Rhode Islanders,” said Parlange. “Through our health-focused colleges, we are improving health outcomes across the state. We remain dedicated to working with state leaders, health care providers, and community members to address primary care challenges. I am deeply grateful to the commission members for their ongoing, important work on this issue that touches the lives of every Rhode Islander.”

Feasibility study calls public medical school “an essential investment”

The study recommends establishing a public, M.D.-granting medical education program at URI, and outlines a proposed four-year, five-phase plan that would culminate in the launch of the program’s charter class in fall 2029.

Rhode Island is experiencing a net loss of primary care clinicians, according to the study. The inability of many Rhode Island residents to find primary care physicians has resulted in the use of community health centers and urgent care facilities to meet their medical needs, straining resources and creating additional pressures on the health care system.

With one-quarter of Rhode Island’s 1.1 million residents age 60 or over – a demographic that requires a higher per-capita need of health care services – that shortage is expected to worsen in the years ahead. By 2030, the state is projected to have a deficit of roughly 100 primary care providers. That problem is compounded by Rhode Island’s aging workforce, including over 40% of family physicians over age 55 as of 2018 and approaching retirement.

Key findings

- A public M.D. program “represents a clear and strategic pathway for the University of Rhode Island to address the state’s most pressing health-care and economic challenges” and is “an essential investment in the future health, economic vitality, and resilience of Rhode Island and its communities.”
- Compared with other public universities that have recently launched M.D. programs, URI has a solid institutional foundation, including significant growth in research as a designated Carnegie R1 institution and the

well-established Colleges of Nursing, Pharmacy, and Health Sciences.

- A URI medical school would be financially viable and would “generate a transformative return” on state investment. That investment would include \$175 million in private and state contributions for start-up and facilities, along with ongoing annual state support of approximately \$22.5 million and additional funding for grant- and loan-based retention programs.
- A new URI school of medicine would contribute approximately \$196 million annually to the state economy, and return nearly \$30 in economic activity, tax revenue, and health care cost savings for every \$1 taxpayers invest.

While Rhode Island has taken significant steps to reduce its physician workforce shortage through grants, student-loan forgiveness, support for primary care training and other programs aimed at recruitment and retention, the report found that creation of a medical school at URI would amplify these efforts and provide a direct pipeline of physicians ready to meet the state’s health care needs.

The report also found that the M.D. model would provide “a strong complement to Brown University’s private medical school by enabling URI to establish a mission-driven, community-based program focused on primary care, population health, and retaining graduates in Rhode Island.” The report noted that in contrast to higher tuition and lower acceptance rates of private medical schools, “URI can offer a more accessible and affordable pathway into medical education.”

The special commission is expected to make a formal recommendation to the Senate by Jan. 2, 2026. ❖

Brown University Health launches unified adult partial hospital program

PROVIDENCE — Brown University Health has brought together its adult partial hospital programs at Newport and Rhode Island Hospitals to form the Brown University Health Partial Hospital Program. Fully virtual, the evidence-based treatment delivers intensive, short-term mental health care to adults across Southeastern New England.

In combining the programs, Brown Health is able to offer enhanced individualized care and additional high-quality treatment options for patients accessing the system's multidisciplinary psychiatric care. The blended treatment addresses a wide range of patient concerns while improving access to integrated specialty care in areas such as:

- Trauma
- Dual Diagnosis; and
- Emotion Dysregulation
- Young Adults

"By combining our programs, we're able to offer patients more specialized options together with a broader range of therapies, without sacrificing the personal, team-based care they have come to count on," said **SARAH SCHMID-HOFER, MD**, director of the adult partial hospital program at Brown University Health. "Having all these services under one roof makes it easier for patients to get the right help at the right time."

The streamlined program features:

- General Track – for a wide range of mental health concerns
- Young Adult Track
- Trauma Track
- Co-occurring Disorders Track (addiction/dual diagnosis); and
- Building Emotional Awareness and Regulation Track – for emotion dysregulation and related disorders, such as borderline personality disorder

"This combined program will include the same treatment Newport Hospital is known for which addresses mental health and substance use/addiction together in a supportive, strength-based recovery model with Dialectical Behavioral Therapy at its foundation. Patients in this co-occurring track will continue to benefit from learning recovery skills in a nonjudgmental community of their peers which helps to foster mutual learning and personal growth while remaining in their home environment," said **JENNIFER FLETCHER, LMHC**.

"Merging our programs into a single unified system allows ease of access to care and the ability to more efficiently connect individuals with specialty care options to best suit their needs," said **HANNAH HERC, PhD**, division director of the adult partial hospital program. "We are excited about the breadth of care options we can offer the community, as well as the depth of experience and knowledge our providers collectively bring." ❖

Brown Physicians Inc. joins Brown Health Medical Group

PROVIDENCE — Brown Physicians Inc. (BPI) and Brown Health Medical Group have completed reviews by both the Federal Trade Commission and Rhode Island Attorney General **PETER NERONHA** to merge, which became effective in October.

BPI is a multi-specialty practice group founded and led by faculty affiliated with The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. Their six foundations – Dermatology, Emergency Medicine, Medicine, Neurology, Surgery, and Urology – will join Brown Health Medical Group, the physician-led and governed multi-specialty medical group that is part of the Brown University Health system.

The merger will result in BPI's more than 500 physicians joining Brown Health Medical Group's 1,000 plus providers. The merged organization of more than 1,500 providers will deliver high quality, innovative care to patients in Rhode Island and the region as one-unified entity.

"A key benefit of this merger for both patients and providers will be the integration of BPI practices into Brown Health's electronic health record system," said **ANGELA CALIENDO, MD, PhD**, Warren Alpert Foundation Professor and Executive Vice Chair, Department of Medicine, Brown University, President of Brown Physicians, Inc. "This transition is designed to optimize care delivery, enhance data sharing, and ensure that all providers have access to a unified patient record, leading to more integrated and efficient care. Patients will benefit from reduced paperwork, timely access to test results, and improved coordination among specialties, all accessible via a single patient portal."

"The BPI physicians and practices already work closely with our medical group and hospitals. With all of us now officially being on the same team – and soon on the same electronic health system – we'll be able to deliver more seamless, connected, and innovative care to the communities we serve," said **BABAR KHOKHAR, MD**, EVP, Chief Physician Officer, Brown University Health and President of Brown Health Medical Group. "This is a transformative moment for our health system, and a big win for patients across Rhode Island and the region."

As part of the merger conditions set forth by Attorney General Neronha, Brown Health will increase access to primary care for 30,000 new patients over a three-year period and potentially extend to 40,000 new patients over four years. In addition, Brown Health also committed to hiring approximately 27 additional primary care providers over the next three years. These conditions are consistent with work already underway to increase efforts to recruit and retain primary care physicians to address the state's ongoing shortage and will be further expanded to meet the AG's expectations.

"We are grateful that the regulatory reviews are complete, and we are now focused on moving forward with integration plans, including transitioning BPI to our electronic health record system," said **JOHN FERNANDEZ**, President and CEO of Brown University Health. "The newly combined organizations will also support the continued growth of research and education in the Brown University Health system, reinforcing our commitment to academic excellence and innovation in healthcare." ❖

Miriam breaks ground on \$125M campus transformation

PROVIDENCE — As it nears its centennial in 2026, The Miriam Hospital recently broke ground on a transformational \$125 million modernization project that will usher in a new era of patient-centered care.

The comprehensive project will feature a state-of-the-art Emergency Department with expanded capacity to meet growing demand, single-occupancy inpatient rooms designed for privacy and healing, and campus-wide infrastructure upgrades to enhance both patient experience and the work environment for The Miriam's 2,800 dedicated caregivers.

Joined by Providence Mayor **BRETT SMILEY**, Pawtucket Mayor **DONALD GREBIEN**, and community and hospital leaders from across Brown University Health, the event marked the start of a new chapter for The Miriam – founded in 1926 through a grassroots effort led by local women. Today, the hospital is nationally recognized for clinical excellence and is one of only four in the world to earn Magnet designation for nursing excellence seven consecutive times.

"As we approach The Miriam's 100th anniversary, this project is both a celebration of our legacy and a commitment to our future," said **MARIA DUCHARME, DNP, RN**, president of The Miriam Hospital and chief quality executive for Brown University Health. "It will provide our community with a modern emergency department and private inpatient rooms designed for safety, comfort, and healing. I'm deeply grateful to our incredible team whose compassionate care and expertise continue to define The Miriam Hospital's legacy."

The modernization project has been thoughtfully designed to enhance capacity, improve patient flow, and reduce wait times, particularly during peak emergency department hours. Key design features include:

- Dedicated emergency entrance and private check-in area on Summit Avenue, creating a more efficient experience for patients.
- Reconfigured emergency department layout that nearly doubles functional space while adding just 4,500 square feet to the overall footprint.
- Enhanced accessibility features aligned with The Miriam Hospital's recent geriatric accreditation to better serve Rhode Island's growing older population.

"Today, we honor The Miriam's century of service while laying the foundation for its next hundred years," said **JOHN FERNANDEZ**, president and CEO of Brown University Health. "This is more than an investment in infrastructure; it's a promise that The Miriam Hospital will continue to provide world-class care for our community for generations to come."

More information, including 3D virtual tours of the future emergency department, lobby, and patient rooms, is available at: www.Miriam100.org. ❖

\$12.1M federal award to advance research on human pathogens

The COBRE for Translational Approaches to Pathogens of Human Significance will target treatments for highly prevalent diseases like malaria and TB

PROVIDENCE [BROWN UNIVERSITY] — The Center for International Health Research (CIHR) at Brown University Health has received \$12.1 million to establish a Center for Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) focused on "Translational Approaches to Pathogens of Human Significance" from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences. **JENNIFER FRIEDMAN, MD, PhD, MPH**, professor of pediatrics and of epidemiology, and **JONATHAN KURTIS, MD, PhD**, chair of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine are principal investigators.

With this funding, the center will use interdisciplinary approaches to mitigate the significant morbidity and mortality caused by pathogens that are highly prevalent among human populations. The diseases initially targeted by the center – malaria, tuberculosis, schistosomiasis, and ebola – collectively cause two million deaths annually with roughly half occurring in children. These infections are further responsible for a significant burden of disease that is driven by the morbidity they cause among infected individuals.

The Center for International Health Research was established by Rhode Island Hospital in 2005 with two faculty members and has grown to include 10 full time and many affiliated faculty. CIHR will be the scientific and mentoring hub, focused on developing research project leaders dedicated to studying these pathogens. Using a "team science" approach, the COBRE will conduct cutting-edge translational research, more efficiently propelling discoveries toward application to human populations. This approach engenders and emphasizes fluency across scientific disciplines spanning the continuum from molecular biology to population science.

"With the growing scale and complexity of scientific research, this approach is crucial to the ultimate success of our research project leaders, who will learn within a highly successful model," Dr. Friedman said. "The long-term goal of the COBRE is to develop, sustain, and recruit a critical mass of investigators and establish key cores with a focus on some of the most significant pathogens impacting human health." ❖