



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR DANIEL J. MCKEE

August 6, 2021

Dear Cabinet Members:

As I said in my introductory letter for the FY22 budget proposal, no one could have foreseen the devastating impact that COVID-19 would have on our state. Our fight against this pandemic is not over, but we do see the light at the end of the tunnel. Your agencies have demonstrated perseverance, hard work, and innovative thinking to help Rhode Island emerge from this pandemic.

As you know, one of the most important functions of state government is the development of the budget. I've always believed that a budget is a statement of priorities, values, and principles. We also know that this upcoming FY23 budget process will be one like no other, as we are still fighting against COVID-19, but beginning our path forward to a more resilient, equitable and prosperous Rhode Island.

Our state's most vulnerable citizens have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic over the last year and a half. This crisis has revealed the inequities that are experienced by residents, especially our minority and low-income residents, in communities across our state. In short, recovery alone is not sufficient to meet the challenges our communities face. Rather, we must craft an approach that ensures that Rhode Island emerges from the pandemic with a stronger, more equitable economy that helps all of its citizens reach their full potential.

With that guiding principle in mind, I have been leading Rhode Island 2030, a series of community conversations that will help chart our course over the next decade. Guided by the input of citizens and experts, the FY23 budget proposal will not only prepare the State for the short term, but also propose investments that will drive Rhode Island toward a more prosperous and equitable future. Accordingly, I recommend a FY23 budget that applies a strong emphasis on:

- Supporting small businesses that drive Rhode Island's economy and create jobs;
- Improving education and child care systems;
- Ensuring that equity is a guiding principle throughout our budget;

- Empowering our partners in all 39 cities and towns;
- Expanding access to mental health and substance use disorder services,
- Ensuring that criminal justice and human service programs continue to focus on equity and social justice; and
- Continuing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic effects.

Agency budget proposals should reflect these priorities while ensuring that the State remains fiscally responsible. It is important to note that as the availability of federal stimulus funds declines, agencies and the whole of state government must strategically plan for a future without these funds.

Additionally, we passed historic pieces of legislation this session that will put our state on a more sustainable and prosperous path, and they should be carefully considered as agencies submit their submissions to ensure that we meet the standards set in these laws. In particular, the Act on Climate, which ensures that the state is prepared for climate change and it creates affordable and sustainable pathways toward a net-zero climate emission future.

Thank you for all that you are doing on behalf of our state. I look forward to reviewing your budget submissions and working together to build a more resilient Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel J. McKee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Daniel" being the most prominent part.

Daniel J. McKee
Governor