

2025: What A Year



Every year, the Economic Progress Institute (EPI) advances racial and economic justice through research, advocacy, and community power. 2025 was no exception and reminded us that progress is not guaranteed. It must be protected, defended, and strengthened by those who refuse to give up. **EPI refuses to give up on progress and economic opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.**

This year, in the face of unprecedented federal cuts through H.R.1, renewed attacks on equity and democracy, and growing demands on Rhode Island's safety net, **EPI remained the trusted voice calling for data-driven policy and moral courage.** Because of you,

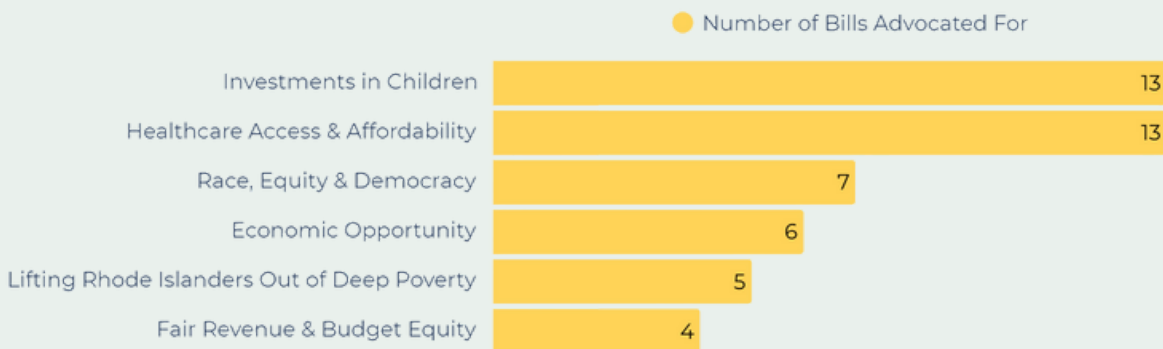
our supporters and partners, the EPI team has shown what's possible when research, advocacy, and people most impacted by policy come together.

Across nearly 50 bills, countless legislative hearings, coalition leaderships, research materials, trainings, and thousands of community touchpoints, EPI moved forward racial and economic equity. **We are resilient, powerful and effective when we work together.** Below, we look back as well as amplify our challenges and priorities ahead. Because of you, EPI enters 2026 ready to meet the moment, safeguard progress, and build a Rhode Island where every family, child, elder, worker, and community can thrive. As we prepare for the year ahead, I hope you will consider making a generous year-end gift to support this critical work. Let's continue to get into some good trouble in 2026 and beyond.

- Weayonnoh Nelson-Davies, Esq. Executive Director

A Look Back

Advocated for 48 bills across 6 key policy areas at the State House



Putting Rhode Islanders First

We had victories with 16 out of the 48 bills on our legislative agenda, from payday lending reform to child care rate increases to solidifying a path for higher minimum wage. EPI also testified against many harmful pieces of legislation, including ones that would cost valuable revenue without providing benefits to most Rhode Islanders. Such proposals included eliminating state taxation of social security income (even for the highest income filers), weakening or eliminating the estate tax, and enacting massive tax credits for data centers. None of these passed.

Legislative Wins

Payday Lending Reform

Closed the 260% APR storefront payday lending loophole to protect households from predatory debt — a major breakthrough years in the making.



Additional Policy Wins

- Paid Family Leave — Wage replacement rising to 75% & expanded eligibility
- Baby Bonds — Wealth-building opportunity for children in deep poverty
- Minimum Wage — Path to \$16/hour in 2026 & \$17/hour in 2027
- Child Care Access Improvements — 20% rate increase & extended educator access
- Public Transit & Paratransit — \$15M to sustain essential mobility
- Housing Revenue — Second luxury home tax to support affordability
- Medicare Savings Program — \$7.1M expansion for nursing home staffing & \$12M for wages & retention
- Care Access Reform — Pilot limiting prior authorization delays

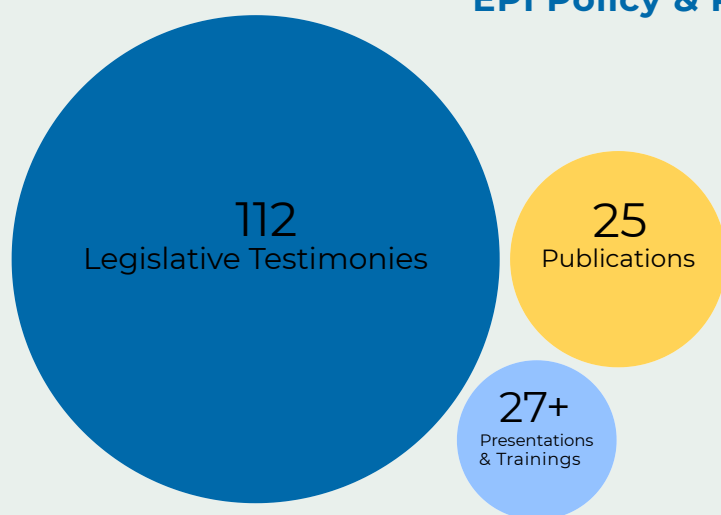
Revenue for Rhode Islanders Coalition

The Revenue for Rhode Islanders Coalition advocated together to address unmet needs and create a fair tax structure. Our campaign to establish a 3% tax on income above the Top 1% threshold gained serious traction in 2025. EPI, as a leading steering committee member, will continue to advocate to generate more than \$190 million annually for critical housing, education, healthcare, and community needs.

The Coalition's Impact & Reach at a Glance:

- 1,000+ petition signatures
- 1,116 advocacy letters to raise revenue delivered to legislative leadership
- 8 Tax Justice community teach-ins across 3 cities
- Participated in major statewide rallies and protests

EPI Policy & Research



4 Policy Briefs

1. Moving Beyond the Mass Exodus Tax Flight Myth
2. Equity Impact Statements: Tools for Advancing Equitable Policies
3. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and RI Works
4. Immigrants' Access to Public Benefits: Changes Under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA or H.R.1)

Building People Power

- 32,000 +** Rhode Islanders Engaged
- 12** Campaign & Legislative Kickoffs/Events
- 10** College Interns
- 1** Policy & Research Learning Hub Pilot at Rhode Island College



HR-1: Our Federal Fight

H.R.1 (One Big Beautiful Bill Act) represents the greatest threat to Rhode Islanders in a generation. H.R.1. made unprecedented cuts to Medicaid and SNAP to make permanent tax cuts for the wealthy. More than 50,000 Rhode Islanders will lose health insurance and 14,000 Rhode Islanders will be at risk of losing nutrition assistance because of it while also making the state responsible for millions of new costs.

In response, EPI:

- Co-hosted Town Halls with Congressional Delegation to Educate Communities About Federal Risks
- Worked with National Partners to Assess State-Level Impacts
- Hosted Several Webinars and Briefings for Communities and Policymakers
- Convened HR-1 Strategy Meetings with Community Leaders and Policy Advocates
- Produced and Widely Circulated a Clear, Accessible HR-1 Infographic
- Participated in EOHHS and DOR Federal Compliance Advisory Groups
- Equipped Advocates, Caseworkers, and Community Organizations with Tools to Protect Families
- Called on State Policymakers to Raise Revenue to Protect Rhode Islanders

We The People: The Rhode Forward 2026

Our Charge for the Year Ahead

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“H.R.1 excludes thousands of lawfully present and tax-paying residents from supports that sustain families and Rhode Island’s local economy.”

— EPI Policy Brief: Immigrants’ Access to Public Benefits (2025)

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This is not business as usual. Rhode Islanders are facing federal cuts, strained safety nets, and widening inequities — particularly impacting our immigrant families, low-wage workers, children and communities of color. At the same time, Rhode Island faces budget gaps that put investments in childcare, housing, transit, and workforce development at risk. Yet, there remains hope and unprecedented opportunities to build power, transform systems, and expand justice.

In 2026, EPI will:

- Defend access to healthcare, nutrition, and essential supports against federal rollbacks and disinvestments
- Continue to push for Tax Justice and Fair Revenue to fund unmet needs in Rhode Island
- Advance policies grounded in equity, democracy, and economic opportunity
- Build community power through coalition work, research, trainings, and public education
- Deepen the pipeline by expanding the Policy & Research Institute and Learning Hub



We the People: the Rhode Forward was not just the theme of our Annual Conference. It is our mandate, our movement, and our path forward.

Please Support This Work

Nonprofits, including EPI, are being asked to do more with less as the need for trusted research and advocacy continues to grow while philanthropic and government funding remain uncertain. Your generosity fuels policy research, strengthens advocacy, equips communities, and protects progress. Together, we can ensure that Rhode Island moves forward.



Give Now!



Keep in Touch!