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## **MEDIA ADVISORY: House Oversight Committee to review emergency spending on COVID-19 response**

STATE HOUSE — The House Committee on Oversight is scheduled to meet Thursday to hear a report on how the state has spent emergency funds in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee will meet **Thursday, Nov. 19, from 3 to 5 p.m.** in the House Lounge on the second floor of the State House. It is expected to be the first of two meetings that will delve into the handling of the COVID crisis.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, also known as the CARES Act, included \$339.8 billion in funding for state and local governments, including \$1.25 billion for Rhode Island.

“It’s time to get back to the business of lawmaking,” said Speaker of the House-elect K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick). “With this year’s budget still looming over us, and COVID-related legislation to consider, it’s imperative that the legislative branch get a handle on how the emergency funds have been spent as well as the process that led to current pandemic policy.”

The committee will hear a presentation by Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott, director of the Department of Health, who will review emergency spending on the COVID-19 response at nursing homes, hospitals and other congregate care settings. She will also discuss the decision-making process that led to Executive Order 20-95 issued on Nov. 5, which included stay-at-home advisories, further travel restrictions, and further limitations on social gatherings. She is also expected to discuss any future potential restrictions due to the spread of COVID-19.

“It’s important that the Oversight Committee hear from the Administration about the state’s efforts to respond to COVID-19 and administer CARES Act funding,” said Majority Leader-elect Christopher R. Blazewski (D-Dist. 2, Providence.) The information will be helpful in crafting the budget going forward.”

Rep. Patricia Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick), chairwoman of the House Oversight Committee, said she is eager to take a close look at how COVID emergency money has been spent.

“Checks and balances are a fundamental part of our government,” she said. “While the governor may have done an admirable job in dealing with this crisis, it’s time for the Oversight Committee to come back and delve into everything that’s been done up to this point, especially how the emergency funding has been spent.”

The State House remains closed to the public due to the pandemic. The meeting will be televised live on Capitol Television, which can be seen on Cox Channels 15 and 61, in high definition on Cox Channel 1013, on Full Channel on Channel 15 and on Channel 34 by Verizon subscribers. It will also be live streamed at <http://ritv.devosvideo.com/show?video=cd679c40105a>.

Members of the media wishing to arrange for coverage or interviews are asked to contact Larry Berman at (401) 447-2655.

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