



The Substance Use and Mental Health Leadership Council of RI

July 22, 2020

RE: Budget Article – Department of Business Regulations/Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee.

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Dr. Susan Storti and I am the President and CEO of The Substance Use and Mental Health Leadership Council of RI (d/b/a The Leadership Council). The Leadership Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on the budget article pertaining to the Department of Business Regulation/Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC). The Leadership Council would like to be recorded in support of this article.

Over the past few years, The Leadership Council has worked very closely with OHIC to address issues pertaining to the integration of behavioral health into primary care by removing administrative encumbrances to integration and, the transition of payment models to allow greater flexibility and support for team-based care.

The Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner has consistently strived to reduce consumer co-payments and/or expenses as evidenced by the \$273 million dollars saved through a rate review process. Additionally, OHIC recently saved \$7.5 million dollars for RI businesses by removing the Health Insurance Tax for 2021. Most importantly, a study published in Health Affairs concluded that RI's OHIC regulations successfully lowered health care spending by 8.1%.

Investigations and exams conducted by OHIC continue to play a critical role in eliminating the disparities between physical and behavioral health care, and in 2019, Rhode Island was ranked as the most improved state by the Commonwealth Fund, - improving on access and affordability, prevention and treatment, healthy lives, and insured adults.

For these reasons, The Leadership Council urges the legislature to take an important step in maintaining the access and value of health care provided in Rhode Island especially during such uncertain times, by reporting out in support of the budget article pertaining to the Department of Business Regulation/Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner,

Sincerely,

Susan A. Storti, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, CARN-AP
President and CEO