



**Rhode Island Partnership  
for Home Care**

*Advancing quality healthcare at home*

March 1, 2021

**VIA EMAIL:** HouseLabor@rilegislature.gov

Hon. Anastasia Williams  
Chair, House Committee on Labor  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: House Bill 5721 on Minimum Wages During Declared Public Health Emergencies**

Dear Chair Williams,

On behalf of my association, I wish to express my opposition to House Bill 5721. This bill seeks to increase wages by one and one-third of the regular rate of pay during declared public health emergencies. While we are interested in the concept, providers delivering homemaking and personal care, home health, home infusion, palliative care and hospice services simply cannot afford to implement this bill, if passed into law as an unfunded mandate. From our experience over the past year of the current emergency, despite our ability to keep vulnerable patients safe at home and reduce their risk of exposure and hospitalization due to COVID-19, home care was not prioritized for emergency financial relief by Governor Raimondo until Rhode Island's remaining CARES Act funding needed to be expended right before the December 30, 2020 deadline. This emergency has left home care providers further behind in their ability to attempt to compete with wages offered by nursing homes, assisted living facilities and hospitals; all of whom are better funded than home care despite providing similar services and level of care.

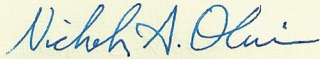
As I have expressed during other hearings this legislative session by your committee on wage-related bills, the maximum reimbursement for Medicaid-contracted home care services is \$6.59 per 15-minute unit of service or \$26.36 per hour. From that reimbursement rate, approximately 42% or \$11.07 is expended on federal and state requirements, such as payroll taxes, professional liability insurance, workers' compensation insurance and continuing education for licensure renewal and regulatory compliance. This does not include the litany of unfunded requirements for travel time and mileage reimbursement between visits, brick-and mortar operations and training site utilities and rent, medical equipment and supplies, electronic health records and electronic visit verification. While we are committed to starting wages for licensed nurse assistants (CNAs) at \$15.00 per hour and strive to do so with the remaining \$15.29 after operational expenses, this type of unfunded mandate is untenable at the current reimbursement rate. Without supplemental funding, there is no way that providers can afford \$20.00 or more per hour for CNAs, never mind the cost under current reimbursement rates for higher wages for skilled nursing and therapeutic staff.

If this bill were to pass, the Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care respectfully requests an amendment requiring the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), its subordinate divisions within the Medicaid Program and other state government-funded healthcare programs, as well as all commercial health insurance carriers, workers' compensation insurance carriers and long-term care insurance carriers to increase their provider reimbursement rates proportionately to the percentage of the required wage increase to cover the costs of this mandate.

I would be happy to further discuss this issue with you, the members of the committee and the sponsor of this bill. We want to continue to ensure that your constituents that use home care remain safe and independent at

home and in your district with our support. Passing this bill as it is currently proposed would have a catastrophic financial impact on home care providers during the remainder of our COVID-19 response and the next declared public health emergency.

Regards,



Nicholas A. Oliver, MPA, CAE  
Executive Director

cc: Members, House Committee on Labor  
Hon. David Morales, HB-5721 Sponsor  
Sharon Reynolds Ferland, House Fiscal Advisor  
Lynne Urbani, House Policy Director  
Robert Goldberg, Esq., Lobbyist, Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care