

May 15, 2024

Cathy Fontaine
Seven Hills RI
Bill Numbers: HB 7591 & SB 2553
Viewpoint: Support

To: The House Finance Committee,

My name is Cathy A. Fontaine, and I have been an employee for 27 years at Seven Hills Rhode Island. I Coordinate Respite services for many children with disabilities and their families. Hiring workers is one of my responsibilities. I supervise direct support workers that care for children in the absence of their parent(s) or guardian(s). Staffing has been one of the hurdles in my career due to the rates of pay not attracting workers to fill the need. I'm speaking for the 88 families that I support by asking for your support on "closing the gap" for rate reform" and support the bills HB 7591 and SB 2553 as it will fully fund people with disabilities, seniors, children, families for decades to come.

Over my 27 years working for Seven Hills RI, I have seen so many children end up in the guardianship of their grandparents or other loved ones. It always breaks my heart to see a grandparent(s) dealing with many different problems their grandchild(ren) face. It has been difficult over the years to find direct support professionals to do the work needed without the financial support from these two bills. Many children end up in Bradley Hospital which puts tremendous stress on these families. It is imperative for Seven Hills RI to be able to pay workers the rates at which they were promised in 2022.

For TWO DECADES, most community-based services have not received rate adjustments from Medicaid to account for the cost to provide services. The rate reform directed the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner to conduct a comprehensive review process and provide recommendations for setting future Medicaid reimbursement rates. These new rates will impact the ability to provide services and therefore, the thousands of Rhode Islanders who rely on them. This will truly change lives!

I am asking to please "CLOSE THE GAP"!! Urge the Governor to support the FULL recommendation of \$160 million dollars in the health and human services to ensure ALL Rhode Islanders access the support and care they need.

By making these overdue investments now, Rhode Island can leverage new federal Medicaid dollars for our state's economy, bolster our health and human services workforce and improve access to care.

PLEASE, let's" FULLY follow through on this investment.

Sincerely,

Cathy A. Fontaine