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one child at a time.

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David Caprio

CONTACT
153 Summer Street
Providence, RI 02903
401.276.4300.p
401.331.3285.f
401.729.5899.tdd
childrensfriendri.org



May 15, 2024

Chairman Marvin Abney
House Committee on Finance
RI State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: In support of Representative Spears', H-7591

Dear Chair Abney and members of the Committee,

We write in strong support of Representative Spear's bill, H-7591 to require that the social and human service rates recommended by the Office of Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC)'s be incorporated into the caseload estimating process and that the Governor include the recommended rates for each department in the Governor's annual budget submission.

For 190 years, we at Children's Friend have worked to advance the well-being and healthy development of the youngest and most vulnerable children in Rhode Island. Today, alongside our permanency, pre-k, child care, Head Start and nutrition services, we provide Early Intervention and home visiting support to thousands of families. For the families with whom we work, most of whom are earning less than the federal poverty level, these programs are a lifeline that enables helps them strive for a better future for their children.

We run several programs – including First Connections and Early Intervention - that rely on Medicaid reimbursement rates to pay for the services we provide. As we've shared with you, these rates are often well below the cost of providing the services. The rate review process OHIC engaged in last year was an important step in righting the ship – although the Governor's failure to fully fund most programs will have significant negative impacts on our clients.

Representative Spear's bill is an important step in ensuring that the state keeps Medicaid rates current, so they do not get so outdated. Our clients need and deserve a stable social and human service system where provider rates are updated on a regular and consistent basis.

While we urge the state to make the needed investments to correct the current inadequacies in Medicaid rates in the FY25 budget, Rhode Island also needs to reassess the rate review and allocation process as suggested in this bill. This will ensure that the state better plans and schedules social and human services rates to ensure our state's safety net is maintained.

Thank you for your time and review of this testimony, and for your continued efforts to support the children who are the future of our State. If you have further questions or need any additional information, please contact me at dcaprio@cfsri.org.

Sincerely,

David Caprio
President & CEO