RHODE ISLAND FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT AFL-CIO

To: House Finance Committee
From: James Parisi, Field Representative
Date: May 15, 2024
Re: **Human Service Budget Submission - Rate Review**
        *Testimony in **Support** of 2024-H 7591 (Representative Spears et al.)*

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals supports Representative Spears legislation to require the Governor to request funding for certain human service programs based on state rate review recommendations when submitting a proposed state budget. The RIFTHP represents workers at the Trudeau Center who have a keen interest in state funding of human service providers.

After decades of underfunding, human service providers such as the Trudeau Center experienced a severe staffing crisis caused by inadequate pay and benefits triggered by chronic state underfunding. Significant improvements were made in the last several years; alleviating but not resolving the challenge of finding qualified staff to do this important work.

In 2022, the General Assembly took the important step to require a regular review of provider rates to identify funding necessary to adequately provide services to Rhode Island residents. It is important that the state decision-makers have information on needed rate adjustments on a regular basis. Unfortunately, while there may be funding increases identified through the rate review, the Governor is not obligated to request the identified funding increase.

The RIFTHP was proud to support the rate review legislation in 2022, and we fully support this bill to ensure that the funding adjustments identified by the rate review process find themselves in the Governor's budget request submitted every January.

We support the idea that a proposed state budget should be built on provider rates identified through the state review done pursuant to RIGL 42-14.5-3(t). The General Assembly will maintain final approval of a state budget should this bill pass, but they would begin the budget process with a request that includes research-based justified human service provider rates.