



The Substance Use and
Mental Health Leadership Council of RI

2/28/2024

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Finance Committee

I wish to attack this from a different angle. We currently have a behavioral health workforce shortage. Due to low reimbursement rates, providers are not able to offer competitive pay to potential employees who can make more money working in fast food places. Because many of these potential employees are coming out of college, they are seeking jobs that provide enough money for them to pay their student loans and also be able to live, they will take the higher paying jobs in retail and food services. Speaking bluntly, we cannot get people to work in the human service industry because of the low pay! When I talk to people about this issue my providers have not had rate increases in some 10-20 yrs. on services rendered. Some of these providers have told me that they have to sell buildings in order to make payroll. Another provider told me they asked employees who received pay checks on a Friday to hold off cashing them until the following Tuesday. This request led to employees leaving the agency for other jobs because of concerns about being paid.

We are at a crisis point with healthcare in RI – Shortage of Doctors in primary care – specialty Drs and dentists and why, because we don't pay competitive wages and rates for services. The other issue is uncompensated care, the hospitals get a chunk of money we don't we also serve anyone who comes threw our doors.

I sat on the rate review commission and we did a lot of work on this issue. This can't be spread over 3 yrs. you need to bite the bullet and do it now before we fall further behind the 8 ball.

Question? Can operate your business on what you were making in 2000?

My Providers can't wait they are struggling.

When I started in the GA in 2001 we were 4 th in the nation on Substance use and mental health programs. The last I read we were number 48. The state took their eye off the ball so **-Batter Up -**

LET'S DO IT

John J. Tassoni, Jr.
President / CEO