



2/28/24

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support of H7225, Article 9, Section 5

Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment **in support of H7225, Article 9, Section 5**, regarding reimbursement rates for social and human services. While I applaud the recommended 100% funding for Early Intervention included in the Governor's proposed FY25 budget, the 33% increases for other human service programs are not adequate. All programs should be funded at 100%.

My name is Margaret Holland McDuff, and I am CEO of Family Service of Rhode Island (FSRI). FSRI is a health and human service organization with the mission "to advance equity, hope, and opportunity in our communities." We support children, individuals and families across the state with our 25 plus programs and services, which includes Early Intervention, First Connections, outpatient mental health counseling, HIV prevention and education, housing supports, and more.

FSRI was involved and supportive of the rate review legislation that was passed in 2022, and worked with the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner on the subsequent process and recommendations. Full implementation of these recommendations – 100% funding for these critical social services – is essential to the health and well-being of all Rhode Islanders.

As we know, the pandemic exacerbated a workforce crisis that was already underway for health and human service organizations. Waitlists for services, inadequate staffing, and high caseloads are still a reality for our sector. If we do not fully invest in these services, we will be unable to meet the needs of Rhode Islanders at appropriate levels of care and will stress (our already stressed) higher levels of care through increased hospitalizations and more costly services.

We thank the Governor for his support of the rate process, and working to implement increases for human service programming in the face of a tight budget. However, **we must fund all human services at 100% to ensure the health and well-being of our state.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very important legislation. Please feel free to contact me with any questions

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Margaret Holland McDuff'.

Margaret Holland McDuff
CEO

