

April 24, 2024

RE: H 7225: Budget Amendments 8 and 10

Chairman Abney, Vice Chairs Slater and Marszalkowski, and members of the House Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment regarding H 7225, Budget Amendments 8 & 10.

The Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families (RICCF) is comprised of forty-three member organizations who provide and advocate for family strengthening and support resources, comprehensive child and family services including: child welfare, behavioral health, special education, health care; foster care and residential treatment programs; and family and youth shelter and housing.

Medicaid forms the foundation upon which our healthcare system provides crucial services to those who need it the most and members of RICCF alone utilize more than one hundred Medicaid codes for direct billing that are included in the rates proposed for increase. RICCF has been a staunch supporter of the recent review of Medicaid rates conducted by the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner, and we strongly support full adoption of the rates proposed by OHIC Services for FY'25.

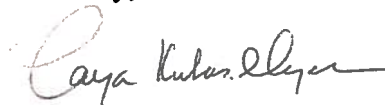
As members of the Health and Human Services Advisory Committee to OHIC, we are very concerned about the budget amendments to limit rate review to a four-year cycle. Given both the rising costs and workforce challenges associated with the provision of home and community health and human services and constraints in state revenues, the most up to date information and analyses regarding rates is critical. We are especially concerned about a four-year delay in review of the rate process for agencies currently funded through procurement by DCYF.

Many of our members provide services through the RI Department of Children, Youth, and Families that are funded by public and private insurance as well as child-specific federal resources, most under Titles IVb and IVe of the Social Security Act. Behavioral health programs for children who are highly traumatized and come from challenged and disconnected families often do not fit neatly into insurance billing codes as our sister states who have moved to rate billing have learned. The current procurement process has deep challenges, but there is no easy solution without study, including investigating models and lessons from other states. This will take time and require resources.

To maintain workable rates in an ever-changing environment, RICCF supports continuing the current statutory obligation for biannual rate review by OHIC. We also encourage the Finance Committee to allocate sufficient funds for OHIC to conduct comprehensive research on specific sets of services that require additional rate building, such as those within the Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Tanja Kubas-Meyer  
Executive Director