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Apr 29, 2025

The Honorable Marvin Abney, Chairman
Committee on Finance
House of Representatives
State of Rhode Island
82 Smith Street, Room 35
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Abney,

My name is Ana Lopez, and I am the CEO of Good Shepherd Home Care. But before I ever held that title, I was a homemaker. I became a Certified Nursing Assistant. For over 20 years, I worked in people's homes — rising early, finishing late, often unseen by the systems that relied on me. I did this while raising my children as a single mother, making ends meet one shift at a time. The work was hard — physically, emotionally, spiritually — and still, it was deeply meaningful. I know firsthand what it means to serve others without recognition, and I now lead an agency with that memory in my heart every day.

Today, I write to express my strongest support for **House Bill 5774** and **Senate Bill 255** — two vital measures that must be included in the FY2026 state budget. These bills are not about convenience — they are about justice and survival for the workers I once stood beside, and the patients we continue to serve.

The establishment of a **Medicaid rate floor** ensures that managed care organizations cannot undercut the reimbursement rates set by the General Assembly. For small, mission-driven agencies like mine, this is not about profit — it's about staying open to care for the underserved population. When rates are driven down, it's the workers' wages that suffer, and ultimately, it's the patients who pay the price.

Equally urgent is the preservation of the **\$1.56/hour behavioral health wage enhancement**, which supports over 600 CNAs and homemakers across the state — including many on our team. These caregivers have completed a rigorous training program that prepares them to care for clients with Alzheimer's, dementia, depression, and other complex conditions. If this enhancement expires on June 30, 2025, it won't just reduce wages — it will send a message that their skill and dedication to care for your loved ones are disposable. And they are not.

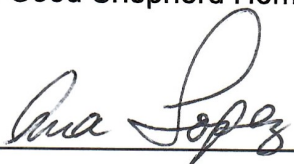
The workforce is already stretched thin. Every cut risks pushing out another caregiver — the same caregivers we all depend on when it's our own loved ones who need help. When we talk about savings, we must ask: **at what cost?** Where will the dollars go that are taken from homemakers and CNAs — and what will it cost us when more elders are forced into institutions instead of living safely at home?

We need your leadership now more than ever. Please include **House Bill 5774** and **Senate Bill 255** in the FY2026 budget. Protect the rate floor. Preserve the wage enhancement. Uphold the dignity of home care workers — the ones who show up every day, whether or not the system shows up for them.

With deep respect,

Ana Lopez

CEO, Good Shepherd Home Care

x  _____