



Testimony in Support of House Bill 5774

Submitted by Home Care Networks LLC

Thank you, Chairperson and members of the House Finance Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

My name is Kelechi Agwunobi, and I represent Home Care Networks LLC, a licensed Medicaid and national accredited home care provider in Rhode Island. I am here to express strong support for House Bill 5774.

Our agency committed early to meeting the 30% threshold for the behavioral health rate enhancement, investing significant time and effort to enroll and train our staff through the Rhode Island College behavioral health program. That decision was made in response to the state's incentive structure, which encouraged providers to take on the added responsibility of specialized training in exchange for a \$1.56 per hour wage enhancement.

Now, we are being placed in an extremely unfair position. If this enhancement is removed from the budget, the state is essentially requiring a pass-through increase—and then pulling back the funding, leaving providers like us to shoulder the cost. This is not a small adjustment; this directly impacts our payroll and puts us in a position where we must make a difficult business decision: either absorb the costs ourselves or reduce wages for workers who have already done the training.

Reducing wages would risk losing the very staff we worked so hard to train and retain. We already face challenges getting employees to complete the 30-hour behavioral health training, and keeping enough of them employed to maintain the 30% threshold is even harder due to turnover. If the enhancement is removed, we may lose both the staff and the benefit of the program—undermining the care our clients depend on.

We urge you to include House Bill 5774 in the FY26 budget to protect providers from having to choose between financial stability and workforce retention—two things that should not be in conflict when we are simply trying to comply with what the state asked of us.

Thank you.