



To: House Committee on Finance
From: Care New England
Date: April 30, 2025
Subject: **CNE Support for HJR 5790**

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the Finance Committee,

Care New England (CNE) Health System is a trusted, integrated health care organization that fuels the latest advances in medical research, attracts the nation's top specialty-trained doctors, hones renowned services and innovative programs, and engages in the important discussions people need to have about their health. CNE is helping to transform the future of health care, providing a leading voice in the ongoing effort to ensure the health of the individuals and communities we serve. With over 8,000 employees throughout Rhode Island, we are the fourth largest employer and second largest health system in the Ocean State.

The state's health care crisis has increased barriers to care for many Rhode Islanders, including longer wait times for appointments, limited provider availability and crowded emergency departments. Inadequate Medicaid funding that does not cover the cost of care, uncompetitive commercial reimbursement rates that lag neighboring states, and chronic health workforce shortages are driving the crisis. These challenges have made it difficult for hospitals to retain and attract health care workers, jeopardizing critical services for patients throughout the state.

HJR 5790 would invest \$90M directly into addressing a long-standing barrier to access and equity in healthcare for low-income Rhode Islanders. This investment will help closer align Rhode Island with our neighbors in MA & CT and it will produce cost savings over the coming years.

Physician reimbursement rates under Medicaid are often significantly lower than those from Medicare or private insurance. This leads many providers to limit the number of Medicaid patients they accept. Increasing reimbursement rates would encourage more physicians to participate in the program, reduce wait times for appointments, and it will improve access to specialists and continuity of care for vulnerable populations.

Rhode Island has historically lagged behind MA & CT in Medicaid payment rates. Bringing rates closer to our neighbors with Medicare or private payers will make the state more competitive in attracting and retaining healthcare providers and it will align with national efforts to strengthen Medicaid as a core part of the safety net.

Low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately enrolled in Medicaid. Boosting provider participation improves preventive care utilization and management of chronic conditions.



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Two Rhode Island health systems are in the top four largest employers in Rhode Island. This investment will help stabilize physician practices and it will also help prevent burnout and workforce shortages.

Finally, better access to primary and preventive care reduces emergency room visits, avoidable hospitalizations and complications from untreated conditions. Making this investment now prevents greater expenditures later.

CNE supports HJR 5790 and encourages the committee to pass this critical healthcare initiative. We are thankful to Representative Noret for his efforts and his leadership on this issue. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Robert Dulski, Director of Government Affairs for CNE, RDulski@CareNE.org. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Dulski".

Robert Dulski
Director, Government Affairs
Care New England



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