

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 8183**

**Submitted to the Rhode Island General Assembly**

**By Anthony LeRoux**

Adult Services Residential Director of Special Programs

Seven Hills Rhode Island

Dear Chairperson and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB 8183, legislation that would significantly improve funding for disability services in Rhode Island. I submit this testimony both as a professional who works within this system every day and as a father of two sons with autism whose future depends on its strength and stability.

In my role as Adult Services Residential Director of Special Programs at Seven Hills Rhode Island, I support adults with complex and significant needs. I have seen firsthand how life changing, high quality, community-based services can be, and I have also seen the consequences when those services are stretched too thin. Providers are doing everything possible to meet increasingly complex medical, behavioral, and clinical needs while operating under rates that simply do not reflect today's realities.

The current funding structure places an enormous strain on the disability service system. Direct support professionals form the foundation of care for individuals with disabilities, yet many are forced to leave the field because wages are not competitive and workloads are unsustainable. This instability is felt immediately by the people most vulnerable to change. When staff turnover is high, individuals lose trusted relationships, routines are disrupted, and progress is undone.

For me, this issue is deeply personal. As a parent of two sons with autism, I think constantly about what their lives will look like as adults. I wonder who will support them, who will advocate for them, and whether the system will be strong enough to meet their needs when I no longer can. No family should have to question whether safe, quality services will be available for their loved ones. HB 8183 offers reassurance that Rhode Island is willing to invest in a system our families can trust.

This bill is not just about funding providers. It is about ensuring dignity, stability, and opportunity for individuals with disabilities across their lifespan. Increased investment will allow providers to retain skilled staff, grow service capacity, and reduce the instability that causes so much harm to those we support. It is also a smart investment, as underfunding inevitably leads to more costly crises, including hospitalizations and emergency placements. If we do not act, the consequences will be felt by individuals, families, and communities across the state. Programs will continue to struggle; families will face longer waitlists and uncertainty, and people with disabilities will experience unnecessary disruption and risk. That is not the future any of us want.

**As lawmakers, you have the ability to shape the future of this system, and as a father, I am asking you to help ensure that when my sons need support as adults, Rhode Island will be ready for them.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

**Anthony J. LeRoux Sr., BA**

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