

To: Honorable Members of the House/Senate Finance Committee

From: Kaitlyn Brien

Date: 5/5/2026

Re: HB 8183

Members of the Committee,

As a finance employee in the disability services area, I can tell you the budget makes no sense. It is a border war that you know we cannot win under the current constraints. While our neighboring states offer competitive wages that reflect the true cost of living and the complexity of this work, our stagnant funding forces us to watch our most skilled staff cross state lines for the paychecks they deserve. This isn't just a personnel issue; it is a fiscal crisis that undermines the stability of the 35 providers serving our community.

This creates a devastating financial cycle for our organizations and an emotional toll on those who remain. As vacancy rates climb, the staff who stay are forced to work grueling hours to maintain basic safety standards. This chronic burnout is more than just fatigue; it is a professional exhaustion that leads to mistakes, decreased morale, and a high risk of losing even more of our dedicated workforce. When our team is stretched to the breaking point, the administrative costs of managing a crisis-mode workplace skyrocket, further draining our limited resources.

Most importantly, this funding gap deeply impacts the 20,000 Rhode Islanders we serve. Continuity of care is the basis of good disability services. When staff leave or burn out, service does not work as it should. Clients lose continuity with providers they have learned to trust and may be handed off to new staff or offered reduced hours of service. For those who benefit from the stability, dignity, comfort, and routine provided by such care, their interruption is a loss. Financially, broken continuity of care is not just a failure of service, but also a waste of money resulting from the need for expensive emergency care.

Healthcare, utilities, and other operational expenses have all dramatically increased since 2023. Mathematically, it is impossible to solve this budget gap with only 50% of what both the Finance Committee and the full Board recommended. This is turning our backs on a proven \$2.33 return for every \$1 invested and the well-being of our residents. To end the cycle of burnout and ensure that Rhode Islanders with disabilities receive the level of care they were promised, we must immediately move to 100% funding.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to all Rhode Islanders.

Respectfully,

Kaitlyn Brien

Seven Hills Rhode Island