

May 6th, 2026

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing in strong support of H8417, which would provide temporary funding to help keep Hillsgrove Clubhouse open during its current Medicaid funding crisis.

The Clubhouse model is designed to reduce social isolation by fostering meaningful relationships, community participation, and a sense of belonging—factors strongly associated with improved mental health outcomes. A 2016 peer-reviewed systematic review found that randomized controlled trial results support the efficacy of the Clubhouse Model in promoting employment, reducing hospitalizations, and improving quality of life. For more than 75 years, the model has demonstrated success through its structured “work-ordered day,” helping individuals build relationships, return to work or school, reduce isolation, and remain connected to their communities.

At its core, this model meets a fundamental human need: to feel wanted, needed, and expected—key elements of true belonging.

Hillsgrove Clubhouse serves as a vital hub for the mental health community and is currently the only Clubhouse in Rhode Island. As a Clubhouse Director and someone who has worked within the Clubhouse model for the past nine years, I have seen firsthand the profound impact these programs have in providing essential services, community, and support for individuals living with mental health conditions.

This impact was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. As many services were reduced or unavailable, Clubhouses became a primary point of contact for individuals experiencing increased isolation. Programs adapted quickly, transitioning to virtual platforms and helping members access and navigate new technologies—ensuring continued connection and support during a critical time.

If Hillsgrove Clubhouse is forced to close due to funding challenges, the community will lose a critical resource. This loss could lead to significant setbacks in individuals’ mental health, as well as their ability to engage meaningfully in their communities, including pursuing employment or education.

In my professional opinion as a Clubhouse Director, this is an urgent matter that deserves immediate attention and support. I respectfully urge the Committee to support H8417 and provide the temporary funding necessary to keep Hillsgrove Clubhouse open.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lynn Fanale
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