

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND



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March 19, 2024

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chair
House Committee on Health and Human Services
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: 2024 – H 7624 – An Act Relating To Insurance – Insurance Coverage For Mental Illness And Substance Use Disorders

Dear Chair Donovan:

Please accept this letter of support for **H 7624** which prohibits health insurance providers from requiring preauthorization for in-network mental health or substance use disorder services.

In 2022 there were 434 accidental drug overdoses in Rhode Island (R.I. Department of Health). Since the implementation of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in Rhode Island in July 2022, calls have increased 75%, from an average of 332 calls per month to an average of 580 calls per month.

It is well-known that for mental health and substance use disorders, prompt access to treatment is essential and is particularly life-saving when an individual's willingness to accept help may be transient. Any delays in treatment resulting from prior authorization requirements may increase an individual's risk of adverse health consequences, including overdose, suicide, and death.

In 2018, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Rhode Island announced that it would no longer require prior authorization for in-network mental health and substance use disorder services and that policy is still in effect. This legislation would require other commercial insurers to similarly eliminate the requirement for prior authorization for in-network mental health and substance use disorders services.

BHDDH urges favorable consideration of this important legislation because it is critical to remove any barriers to treatment for individuals who live with behavioral health disorders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Louis A. Cerbo'.

Louis A. Cerbo, Ed.D.
Deputy Director

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health & Human Services
The Honorable Teresa A. Tanzi
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy