



Testimony in Support

HEALTH CARE ACCESSIBILITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE ACT

April 1, 2025

Chairwoman Donovan and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 5863, which addresses the need for increased reimbursement rates for behavioral health and substance use disorder services.

The Latino Policy Institute (LPI) is committed to advancing equitable public policies that improve the lives of Latinos and all Rhode Islanders. One of our core priorities is to promote access to quality, affordable, and culturally competent healthcare—especially mental and behavioral health care.

H5863 represents a critical step forward in addressing the chronic underfunding of behavioral health services in Rhode Island. This bill would require healthcare entities and network plans to annually report how they require contracted providers to submit claims for in-network outpatient behavioral health services, improving transparency and accountability in provider reimbursement.

Importantly, the bill also mandates a one-time average reimbursement rate increase tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI-Urban) plus an additional five percent (5%) for contracts involving behavioral health services. This adjustment is not just about economics—it's about equity. Low reimbursement rates have led to provider shortages and barriers to care, disproportionately impacting communities of color and low-income residents. By better aligning compensation with the realities of inflation and service demand, we move closer to ensuring behavioral health parity and fair provider treatment.

According to LPI's 2025 Legislative Priorities, behavioral health access is a top concern for our community. Rhode Island must prioritize policy that ensures mental health services are as accessible and timely as physical health services. H5863 helps advance that vision.

We urge the committee to pass H5863 and stand with communities that have long been underserved in the behavioral health system. Let's ensure our providers are supported and our residents—especially our youth, our elders, and our immigrant families—have the care they deserve. Thank you for your time and your commitment to health equity in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,
Awilda Reinoso Lopez
Senior Policy & Research Manager
Latino Policy Institute