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Rep. Susan R. Donovan, Chair

Rhode Island House of Representatives
Health and Human Services Committee

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and Members of the House Health & Human Services Committee,

My name is Gabrielle Schmidt, and I am a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) practicing in an office setting. I am writing to express my support for House Bill 5863, concerning reimbursement rates.

Increasing reimbursement rates will significantly impact myself and the mental and behavioral health workforce. By providing increased support to the providers of care to vulnerable individuals, the quality of mental and behavioral healthcare across Rhode Island will improve, benefiting all residents.

Specifically, this bill will:

- Require commercial insurers to provide a one-time increase to in-network outpatient mental and behavioral healthcare reimbursement rates
- Require commercial insurers to report an annual summary of its plan requirements for contracted providers to submit claims for in-network outpatient behavioral health services to the RI Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner
- Incentivize providers to accept insurance and help sustain their practice or health center
- Potentially increase the size and diversity of the behavioral healthcare workforce if cost-of-living adjustments are made more regularly; fair pay may encourage more people to explore careers in these fields
- Increase consumers' access to timely services, improving patient outcomes through early intervention
- Save insurers money by increasing access to outpatient services and reducing the number of visits to hospitals and emergency departments

There will always be people in need of mental and behavioral healthcare. While there is

currently a lack of support for these vulnerable populations, I believe this bill is a step in the right direction. Thank you for your time and consideration, and for the work that you are doing for the people of Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle Schmidt, LCSW

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