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Dear Chairwoman Donovan and House Health and Human Services Committee Members,

I am writing in support of House Bill 5863 and urge you to vote YES on this much needed legislation. I am a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW) and have been practicing in RI since 2004. In 2008 I opened my own private practice in Providence, and am now in Pawtucket, taking commercial insurance in-network. Our reimbursement rates have not seen meaningful increases since in the 16 years I've been in business. I have witnessed many colleagues change their practices to exclusively private pay because of the stagnant reimbursement rates and hassle of dealing with the insurance companies. Psychotherapy usually involves weekly appointments and treatment often lasts 6 months at minimum, so without access to providers who take insurance, it is unaffordable for the majority people. RI consumers deserve access to mental health treatment, like they do any other medical condition.

I also want to alert you to one other related area that makes it hard to be in private practice and needs reform and legislative support. Currently the insurance companies allow clinicians only 6 months to file a claim, but allow themselves 14 months to adjust claims resulting in claw backs of money they've already paid us with little recourse for us clinicians. They take the money back without warning from your future payments and cause financial hardship. I experienced this for the first time last year, and one of my colleagues, a long time private practice nurse prescriber who specializes in mental health, had such a horrible clawback experience that she got off the insurance panels and now is private pay only, after serving many low and middle income clients for over 20 years. I'd like to see legislation that equalizes the time frame for both clinician and insurance company, 6 months or 14 months for both parties and addresses the harm claw backs can cause, there is certainly a better way to do business.

Sincerely,

Lisa Reichstein, LICSW

