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Testimony in Support of H-5228 – Supporting Self-Directed Care and Direct Support Professionals

Chair Corvese and Honorable Members of the House Labor Committee,

On behalf of SEIU 1199 New England, representing more than 5,000 healthcare and service workers across Rhode Island, we write in strong support of **H-5228**, which strengthens Rhode Island's self-directed supports program for adults with developmental disabilities.

This legislation ensures that participants in the program—who already have the right to choose, direct, and terminate their direct support professionals—can continue to do so **without interruption or limitation**. What H-5228 adds is the ability for these essential workers to **collectively bargain for better training, recruitment, and retention standards**.

H-5228 is **necessary to bring stability to this workforce**. Direct support professionals in the self-directed program are often underpaid, lack access to training opportunities, and face high levels of turnover. These conditions not only undermine the well-being of the workers, but they also make it harder for individuals and families to find and retain the care they need.

This bill provides a pathway to a more reliable, better-supported workforce—without changing the authority of the BHDDH director or infringing on the rights of participants to make their own care decisions, including selecting their workers and setting wages within the state-approved range.

In short, H-5228 is a win for participants, a win for workers, and a win for the long-term sustainability of the program itself.

We urge the committee to support this important legislation.

Respectfully,

Alex Moore

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