

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND



Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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April 30, 2026

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese, Chair
House Committee on Labor
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: 2026— H 7361 — An Act Relating to Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals – Quality Self-Directed Supports Act of 2026

Dear Chair Corvese:

I am writing regarding H 7361, the Quality Self-Directed Supports Act Of 2026.

The Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH) appreciates the stated intent of this legislation to enhance personal care services for developmentally disabled adults. However, after further review, we write to communicate potential adverse impacts the bill as written would have on the administration of the self-directed supports programs, and the broader landscape of services for people with developmental disabilities in Rhode Island.

Individuals who choose this model value the autonomy to select, train, direct, and manage their own support staff. It is important that any changes to policy or workforce structure preserve this autonomy and ensure that individuals maintain meaningful control over their care. Introducing new mechanisms that alter employment relationships could make it more difficult for individuals to manage their staff according to their unique needs and preferences.

Wage and training standards for DSPs should ideally reflect the scope of responsibilities, credentials, and skills required across different service settings. As we continue to strengthen compensation and professional development opportunities for all DSPs, it is important to ensure that any adjustments under this legislation maintain fair and consistent standards across service models. Such a coordinated approach can support both fair wages and high-quality care statewide.

BHDDH also recognizes the importance of maintaining a unified and stable direct support workforce in Rhode Island. Policy changes that affect wage structures or employment terms within one service model may create inconsistencies across the broader system. Fiscal intermediaries for self-directed supports are often also traditional providers in Rhode Island. Thus, it is crucial to consider the inconsistencies that would emerge between the wages and benefits of DSPs in self-directed supports and those of DSPs working for traditional provider agencies.

In conclusion, while we share the commitment to a well-supported direct care workforce, we believe the proposed "Quality Self-Directed Supports Act of 2026," in its current form, poses significant risks to the principles of self-direction, the financial stability of our programs, the equitable treatment of all

DSPs, and the overall administrative efficiency of the BHDDH. We urge the Committee to carefully consider these concerns and the potential unintended consequences of this legislation.

BHDDH remains committed to working with the legislature to find effective solutions that support both the individuals we serve and the dedicated workforce that assists them. We welcome the opportunity for further discussion and collaboration on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Leclerc".

Richard Leclerc
Director

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Labor
The Honorable Evan P. Shanley
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy