



March 12, 2026

The Honorable Representative Susan Donovan
Chair, House Health and Human Services Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for House Bill 7943 - Ban Prior Authorization

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Members of the Committee:

The Mental Health Association of Rhode Island (MHARI) is pleased to express our strong support for **House Bill 7943**, which would eliminate prior authorization requirements for in-network mental health and substance use disorder services. We thank Representative Tanzi and the bill's sponsors for advancing this important legislation.

Prior authorization requirements often create significant barriers to timely behavioral health care. Under these policies, providers must obtain approval from a health insurer before delivering treatment to ensure coverage. In practice, this process can delay or prevent access to care, even when a provider has determined that treatment is medically necessary.

Mental health and substance use disorders are conditions where **timely intervention is critical**. When people are unable to access care promptly, symptoms can worsen, sometimes leading to emergency department visits, hospitalization, or involvement with the criminal legal system. Eliminating prior authorization requirements would help ensure that Rhode Islanders can receive treatment when they need it most.

Removing prior authorization requirements also reduces administrative burden for behavioral health providers. Clinicians spend significant time navigating complex insurance authorization systems instead of providing care to patients. Reducing these barriers can help address provider burnout and encourage more clinicians to remain in insurance networks, improving access to care statewide.

Rhode Island already has evidence that this policy can work. In 2019, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island eliminated prior authorization requirements for in-network



behavioral health services. This legislation would ensure that all Rhode Islanders—regardless of their insurance plan—have the same timely access to care.

Expanding access to behavioral health services benefits patients, providers, and insurers alike. Early treatment improves outcomes and can reduce the need for more intensive and costly interventions later.

For these reasons, **MHARI respectfully urges the committee to support H 7943.**

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to strengthening Rhode Island's behavioral health system.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Laurie-Marie Pisciotta'.

Laurie-Marie Pisciotta
Executive Director
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