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House Health and Human Services
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Room 135
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

We are writing to express strong support for **H7946, the Protect Mental Health Act**, which strengthens Rhode Island's enforcement of mental health and substance use disorder parity requirements. This bill, along with H7945, strengthens the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) for Rhode Islanders, thereby improving access to care.

This legislation would require insurers offering coverage for mental health or substance use disorder services to comply with federal parity requirements and to ensure that treatment limitations—including both **quantitative and non-quantitative treatment limitations (NQTLs)**—do not discriminate against behavioral health care when compared to medical and surgical counterparts.

Patients and clinicians continue to encounter barriers to accessing mental health and substance use disorder treatment despite MHPAEA. Barriers happen through non-quantitative treatment limitations such as restrictive prior authorization requirements, inadequate provider networks, or utilization management practices that are applied in a way that results in disparity of behavioral health services as compared to medical or surgical care.

H7946 helps address these concerns by requiring insurers to conduct meaningful comparative analyses of treatment limitations and to collect data to assess whether policies create disparities in access to behavioral health care. This bill also requires insurers to take corrective action to comply with parity requirements. Meaningful coverage across all benefit classifications for mental health and substance use services should be comparable to medical and surgical coverage to address parity, and this bill does just that. We need more stringent classifications that address areas in behavioral health services in which there is not an adequate network to address inequities within behavioral healthcare access.

Ensuring meaningful parity in coverage is critical for Rhode Islanders. Mental health and substance use disorders are common, treatable conditions, yet access to care remains a major challenge across the state. This bill is an important step toward timely access to behavioral health services across all of Rhode Island, which helps reduce emergency department visits, worsening physical and mental illness, and higher overall healthcare costs. Passage of this bill reinforces



that healthy families and communities are important to Rhode Island and that parity compliance is valued by the state.

Rhode Island has long been a leader in advancing access to behavioral health care and protecting patients' rights. We urge you to support H7946 to continue this leadership both in statute and in practical accountability to Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to improving access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment for Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Joseph Trunzo, Ph.D. – Past President
Julie Wolter, Psy.D. – Federal Advocacy Coordinator