



April 08, 2026

Chairman Louis P. DiPalma
Senate Finance Committee
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for Full Implementation of Rate Increases in FY2027 Budget (H7127) for Cedar Services

Dear Chairman DiPalma and Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of rate increases included in the FY2027 budget, H7127, as they relate to programs serving children with special healthcare needs.

My name is Noelle Wilburn, and I am the Director of Cedar with Family Service of Rhode Island (FSRI). FSRI is a leading Rhode Island nonprofit provider of behavioral health, educational, and social services. Additionally, we are a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC). Our agency's Cedar Center provides critical care coordination and management services to children with complex medical, behavioral, and developmental needs.

As a provider serving this population, we are experiencing increasing demand alongside growing complexity in the needs of the children and families we support. At the same time, reimbursement rates for these services have not kept pace with inflation or the rising costs associated with delivering high-quality, coordinated care. As a result, children and families may experience reduced access to timely, consistent, and comprehensive services.

We appreciate that the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC) has recognized these challenges and recommended inflation-indexed rate increases for these services. We are also encouraged that the Governor's SFY 2027 budget includes these increases. However, the proposed phased implementation providing only 50% of the increase in SFY 2027 and the remaining 50% in SFY 2028 delays the full impact of this much-needed investment.

Given the current workforce crisis and financial pressures facing providers, a delayed implementation risks prolonging existing access challenges for children and families. Programs like Cedar rely on adequate and timely reimbursement to maintain staffing levels, ensure continuity of care, and meet the complex needs of the populations we serve.

Care coordination services play a vital role in helping families navigate fragmented systems, access appropriate care, and prevent more costly interventions such as hospitalizations or institutional care. Ensuring these programs are fully and sustainably funded is imperative.

We strongly support the recommended rate increases and respectfully urge consideration of accelerating their full implementation within SFY 2027. Doing so will better stabilize the provider network and ensure that children with special healthcare needs receive the timely, coordinated care they deserve.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued commitment to Rhode Island's children and families.

Sincerely,

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