

Hello Chairman and Committee,

My name is Timothy Phok. I am a Conflict-Free Case Manager at BHDDH and a member of Local SEIU 580. I represent my coworkers, fellow union members, and the vulnerable population we serve—adults in Rhode Island with developmental disabilities.

I am writing this testimony regarding the proposed BHDDH budget. I believe the budget should be approved. However, there needs to be discussion about the sustainability of the Conflict-Free Case Manager role, specifically concerns related to compensation, workload demands, and the impact these conditions are having on employee well-being.

As a Conflict-Free Case Manager, my responsibilities include plan writing, billing code entry, financial accounting, and extensive travel across the state to meet with clients. Our caseloads are not regionalized or organized geographically, which requires frequent travel across Rhode Island for meet and greets, person-centered planning, preplanning, monthly monitoring visits, and attending IEP meetings. This results in significant time demands, fuel costs, and wear on personal vehicles that are not reflected in our current compensation.

The administrative workload is also substantial. Between plan development, billing compliance, and documentation requirements, the demands are constant. When time off is taken, employees often return to hundreds of unanswered emails and voicemails, creating a backlog that discourages the use of personal time. This cycle is not sustainable and is contributing to declining mental health and overall well-being.

Most critically, the current salary does not meet the basic financial demands of daily living. Covering rent, fuel for statewide travel, and general expenses is not realistic on this income. As a result, many employees, including myself, are forced to work multiple jobs to remain financially stable, making work-life balance nearly impossible.

I am deeply committed to this work and to the underserved populations we serve. However, without changes, the current system will continue to drive staff burnout and turnover. If this budget is passed with the inclusion of improvements to compensation, geographic caseload organization, and workload equity, it will allow case managers to sustain long-term employment, improve service quality, and provide stability for the individuals who depend on us.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,  
Timothy Phok