



May 5, 2026

Senator Louis P. DiPalma, Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
RI General Assembly  
RI State House  
82 Smith St.  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of S 2806, EQUAL PAY FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**

Dear Chair DiPalma,

I, Denise Coppa, from Senate District 35 and Legislative Liaison, of the Nurse Practitioner Alliance of Rhode Island, **Director of the Family Nurse Practitioner Program at the University of RI** and a practicing nurse practitioner am writing in **SUPPORT of Senate Bill 2806**. To clarify, Certified Nurse Practitioners (CNP) are Advanced Practice Providers (APPs) who have successfully completed advanced education at the masters and/ or doctoral level and have taken professional certification or “board” exams that allow them to be licensed by the state of RI, with full practice authority. This includes the ability to diagnose, treat, and prescribe medications and to be the provider of record for citizens in Rhode Island, across the life span.

Rhode Island and the entire country face a projected short fall of over 100,000 primary health care providers by 2034. Nurse practitioners (NP) make up a high percentage of these providers, but only 70% of over 400,000 NP’s actually stay in primary care practice.

Despite this, outdated reimbursement policies continue to undervalue NP services. Medicaid reimburses NPs at 85% of physician rates for the same services, based on assumptions that no longer reflect current practice. In Rhode Island—where NPs have full practice authority and are held to the same clinical, quality, and productivity standards as physicians—this disparity is both inequitable and counterproductive.

Pay inequity not only undervalues the contributions of NPs but also undermines recruitment, retention, and healthcare system sustainability. Rhode Island already lags behind neighboring states in reimbursement rates, limiting program development and exacerbating workforce shortages. States like Oregon have successfully implemented “equal pay for equal work” policies, demonstrating that reimbursement reform is both feasible and impactful.

Rhode Island already reimburses health care providers at much lower rates than our neighboring states. Many NP’s and doctors, for that matter, live in RI, but work across the state lines in Massachusetts and Connecticut. We simply cannot afford this type of attrition. Please help our health care providers to maintain patient access to comprehensive primary health care services in our state.

As a nurse practitioner faculty member and practicing nurse practitioner, representing the NP Alliance, strongly urge passage and funding for S 2806.

Sincerely,

Denise Coppa, PHD, APRN-CNP, FAANP, FAAN  
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