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Rhode Island General Assembly
Health & Human Services Committee
State House
Providence, Rhode Island

Re: Support for Senate Bill S2118 – Preceptor Reimbursement for PMHNP Clinical Training

Dear Health & Human Services Committee members,

I am writing to you as a concerned Psychiatric–Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) student to express my support for Rhode Island Senate Bill S2118.

PMHNP students must now complete 750 hours of supervised clinical hours in psychiatric and behavioral health settings before we becoming eligible for graduation and national certification. These clinical experiences are the very foundation for developing the diagnostic, therapeutic, and psychopharmacologic skills needed to safely treat patients with mental health conditions.

In my current experience as a graduate student, just 5 months from graduation, I have personally experienced the impact of the barriers to securing clinical placements, largely because preceptors are often asked to take on teaching responsibilities without compensation or institutional support. As a result, students and universities spend months searching for high quality preceptors that will educate the next generation of psychiatric providers.

I was moved to become a psychiatric provider after pivoting my nursing career to become a school nurse at Providence Preparatory Charter (Middle) School. Our school’s inaugural year was 2021, when schools were just reopening after the COVID-19 pandemic. This work put me at the epicenter of the dramatic surge of child, adolescent and family mental health crisis exacerbated by the pandemic. The continuing shortage of providers makes in nearly impossible for our students and families to get help in a timely manner. Dealing with a mental illness is bad enough; not being able to get the help you need is unacceptable. Rhode Island cannot let this negative trajectory continue.

At URI, there’s no shortage of empathic, caring, intelligent nurses working hard to grow professionally and take on the challenge of leading patients out of the grip of mental illness. Supporting preceptors through reimbursement would help increase the number of clinicians willing to mentor students and expand the availability of clinical training opportunities.

Passing Senate Bill S2118 would:

- Increase access to clinical placements for PMHNP students
- Help students complete training and graduate on time
- Strengthen the pipeline of psychiatric providers entering the workforce
- Improve access to mental health care for students and families and strengthen school communities

As a future mental health provider committed to serving students and families, I believe this legislation is a critical step toward strengthening Rhode Island's behavioral health workforce.

I respectfully urge you to support Senate Bill S2118. Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to improving healthcare access in our state.

Sincerely,

Cheri Rigby BSN, RN
PMHNP Student, University of Rhode Island