



235 Promenade Street, Suite 455
Providence, RI 02908
401.274.1771
info@rihca.org
www.rihca.org

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Rhode Island General Assembly, State Senate
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
(Submitted electronically via SLegislation@rilegislature.gov)

Re: Support for Senate Bill 2385

Dear Chair Murray and Members of the Committee:

Please accept the Rhode Island Health Center Association's (RIHCA) letter in strong **support** of **Senate Bill 2385**, which would increase access to treatment for those experiencing severe and disabling mental health conditions by removing prior authorizations and step-therapy for any contract between the Rhode Island medical assistance program and a managed care organization.

According to data from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Rhode Island, as of March 2025, an estimated 55,000 Rhode Island adults suffer from a serious mental illness. The practice of step therapy and prior authorization requirements can significantly hinder medical and behavioral healthcare providers from effectively treating patients with severe mental illness. These administrative barriers can delay access to appropriate care, leading to unnecessary patient suffering, increased reliance on emergency services, and healthcare costs.ⁱ

RIHCA's members are the eight Community Health Centers that provide care, including behavioral health, to over 220,000 Rhode Islanders, regardless of their ability to pay. Over the past four years, health centers have experienced a 23% increase in patient volume. Ensuring patients have access to treatment is paramount to meeting the increasing need.

We ask you to pass SB2385 and reform policies that create barriers to medication treatment for those with mental illness. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Melissa Campbell

ⁱ Patel R, Baser O, Waters HC, et al. Open Access to Antipsychotics in State Medicaid Programs: Effect on Healthcare Resource Utilization and Costs among Patients with Serious Mental Illness. JHEOR. 2025;12(1):222-229. doi:10.36469/001c.137909. PMID:40538503

The Rhode Island Health Center Association members include:
Blackstone Valley Community Health Care Inc. ~ Comprehensive Community Action Program
East Bay Community Action Program ~ Providence Community Health Centers
Thundermist Health Center ~ Tri-County Community Action Agency
WellOne Primary Medical and Dental Care ~ Wood River Health