



March 24, 2026

RE: Support for Senate Resolution 3056

Chairwoman Murray and Honorable Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Timothy Farias, LPN, and I am the Regional Director of Business Development for GreenTree Healthcare Management's Northeast Division. I oversee Berkshire Place in Providence, as well as Silver Creek and Dawn Hill in Bristol. I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Resolution 3056.

This resolution addresses a critical gap in Rhode Island's behavioral health continuum. It offers an opportunity to remove barriers that have prevented the Nursing Facility Specialized Psychiatric Unit program from becoming a meaningful placement option for individuals who no longer require acute hospital care, but who still need structured behavioral health support in a clinically appropriate setting.

The NFSPU Certification Standards were introduced in January 2023 through the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Health and the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals. Yet, more than three years later, the program remains unused. That fact alone demonstrates that the current framework is not working as intended.

From the provider perspective, the barriers are clear. The admission criteria are too restrictive, the physical plant requirements are difficult to operationalize, and the reimbursement structure does not reflect the true cost of caring for this population. As a result, providers who may otherwise be willing to participate are effectively shut out.

In my role, I regularly see patients remaining in hospital settings far longer than medically necessary, not because they require continued hospital-level treatment, but because there are too few appropriate step-down options available. Many of these individuals are medically stable, yet still need behavioral health oversight, medication management, supervision, and a structured environment that cannot be met in a traditional community placement.

Skilled nursing facilities can help fill that gap when the right regulatory and financial framework is in place. Allowing appropriate patients to transition to the SNF level of care

would be both clinically appropriate and fiscally responsible. Hospital care is significantly more expensive than nursing home care. Creating a workable pathway for these placements would help reduce unnecessary hospital utilization, ease emergency department and inpatient boarding, and support more efficient use of Medicaid resources while maintaining appropriate patient care.

Reimbursement is a major part of this issue. Current payment levels are not sufficient to support the intensity of services often required, especially during stabilization. For example, the actual cost of providing 24-hour one-to-one CNA coverage with specialized psychiatric training is approximately \$780 per day, including wages and overhead. Current reimbursement is approximately \$300 per day, leaving a shortfall of roughly \$480 per day. That gap makes it financially unrealistic for providers to accept high-acuity patients who may require enhanced supervision for days or weeks.

If Rhode Island wants this program to succeed, the standards must be practical, and the reimbursement must be adequate. Providers cannot be expected to operationalize a model that is clinically demanding, heavily regulated, and structurally underfunded.

Senate Resolution 3056 is an important step toward correcting that problem. With meaningful reform, Rhode Island can create a more functional behavioral health continuum, improve hospital throughput, reduce avoidable costs, and expand access to appropriate care for a highly vulnerable population. Without reform, this initiative will continue to exist on paper without producing real benefit for patients or the healthcare system.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support Senate Resolution 3056 and to advance changes that will allow this program to become workable in practice, not just in theory.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to strengthening Rhode Island's system of care. I would be happy to answer any questions or provide any additional insight based on my experience in the field.

Respectfully submitted,



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