

## 2024 Behavioral Health Legislative Priorities

Your vote is your power. Elected officials gain valuable insight into important issues when their constituents bring them to their attention.

Please review the list of legislative priorities below and contact your state senator and state representative. Tell them why the legislation is important to you and your loved ones. You can find your elected officials [here](#).

If you are new to advocacy, please review these [tips on writing emails to officials](#). If you prefer to meet with legislators in person, check out this [Advocacy 101 video](#).

Issue	Legislation	What It Does	Why It's Important	Status
Equal Access to Services	<a href="#">House Bill 7591</a> Sponsor: Representative Tina Spears Committee: <a href="#">House Finance</a>  <a href="#">Senate Bill 2553</a> Sponsor: Senator Louis DiPalma Committee: <a href="#">Senate Finance</a>	Requires that the Governor include the full recommended Medicaid reimbursement rates for health and human services in his annual budget submission.	After TWO DECADES of neglecting to raise Medicaid rates, Rhode Island's health and human services sector is facing workforce shortages. Inadequate services causes seniors, children and families at risk or in crisis, people with disabilities, and	H-7591 has not been heard in a committee hearing yet  S-2553 was heard in Senate Finance on April 2, 2024. The bill is being held for study.

			<p>people with mental illness and/or substance use disorders to go on waitlists for services when they need help.</p> <p><a href="#">Learn More</a></p>	
<p>Equal Access to Services.</p>	<p><a href="#">House Bill 7876</a> Representative Teresa Tanzi Committee: <a href="#">House Health and Human Services</a></p> <p><a href="#">Senate Bill 2612</a> Senator Linda Ujifusa Committee: <a href="#">Senate Health and Human Services</a></p>	<p>Holds health insurance companies accountable to federal and state laws. Tightens up the definitions of standards of care and medical necessity; prohibits “clawbacks” of reimbursement rates once paid to the provider; reforms utilization review practices (ie, when insurers approve or deny claims for services); creates</p>	<p>Increases clients’ or patients’ access to services.</p> <p>Reduces providers’ administrative burden.</p> <p>Holds health insurers accountable to parity laws.</p>	<p>House Bill 7876 was heard in House Health and Human Services on March 19, 2024 and held for study.</p> <p>Senate Bill 2612 has not been heard in committee yet.</p>

		penalties for violating the law. Modeled after The Kennedy Forum's parity legislation.		
Equal Access to Services	<p><a href="#">House Bill 7716</a> Rep. Teresa Tanzi Committee: House Corporations</p> <p><a href="#">Senate Bill 2180</a> Senator Pamela Lauria Committee: <a href="#">Senate Health and Human Services</a></p>	Requires commercial insurance companies to raise reimbursement rates for outpatient behavioral healthcare services.	Rhode Island is experiencing a shortage of behavioral health professionals. The shortage is in part caused by health insurance companies underpaying behavioral health professionals. Many professionals move their practices to other states where the rates are higher, retire early, or stop accepting insurance. The ever-shrinking network of professionals causes Rhode Islanders to go on waitlists for services when we need help. Timely services save	<p>House Bill 7716 was heard in House Corporations on April 11, 2024 and held for study.</p> <p>Senate Bill 2180 was heard in Senate Health and Human Services on March 7, 2024 and held for study.</p>

			<p>lives.</p> <p>Insurers will save money in the long term because easy and quick access to outpatient services reduces utilization of hospitals and emergency departments – expensive levels of care.</p>	
<p>Equal Access to Services.</p>	<p><a href="#">House Bill 7624</a>  Representative Teresa Tanzi  Committee: <a href="#">House Health and Human Services</a></p> <p><a href="#">Senate Bill 2393</a>  Senator Linda Ujifusa  Committee: <a href="#">Senate Health and Human Services</a></p>	<p>Blue Cross Blue Shield of RI currently does not require prior authorization for in-network mental health or substance use disorder services. This bill requires all other insurers in RI to follow suit.</p>	<p>Has your insurance company ever denied your claim for a service or hospital stay? This bill prohibits insurance companies from denying you in-network behavioral healthcare services, thus increasing clients' and patients' access to timely, life-saving care.</p> <p>It also reduces</p>	<p>House Bill 7624 was heard in House Health and Human Services on March 19, 2024 and held for study.</p> <p>Senate Bill 2393 has not been heard in committee yet.</p>

			providers' administrative burden because they will devote fewer resources to filing insurance claims.	
Strengthen and Expands the continuum of care in RI.	<a href="#">FY 25 State Budget Article 9</a> Committee: <a href="#">House Finance</a>	Allocates state funding to support the development of certified community behavioral health clinics (CCBHCs) in Rhode Island.	CCBHCs are an evidenced-based model of outpatient services. They offer primary care and behavioral health services.  <a href="#">Learn More</a>	The budget article was heard in committee on February 28, 2024.
Suicide prevention and support for behavioral health crises.	<a href="#">House Bill 7035</a> Rep. Mary Ann Shallcross Smith Committee: <a href="#">House Finance</a>  <a href="#">Senate Bill 2066</a> Senator Sandra Cano Committee: <a href="#">Senate Finance</a>	Allocates state funding to support the federally mandated 24/7 mental health crisis line known as 988.	988 is a suicide prevention and behavioral health crisis line open 24/7. Rhode Islanders who call 988 will be connected to a local call center and referred to local services. Rhode Island has the highest call	House Bill 7035 was not heard in committee yet.  Senate Bill 2066 was heard in committee on April 2, 2024 and held for study.

			answer rate in the country!	
Youth Mental Health	<a href="#">House Bill 7147</a> Representative John Lombardi  Committee: <a href="#">House Education</a>	This bill requires the Rhode Island Department of Education to develop and make available a curriculum for four (4) hours of mental health instruction for seventh graders	Teens are experiencing rates of depression higher than ever before. 9.88% of Rhode Island youth ages 12 to 17 used an illicit drug the previous month. Additionally, about 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14. Older teens struggling with depression are more than twice as likely to drop out. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in youth ages 10 to 14.	House Bill 7147 was heard in committee on January 31, 2024 and held for study.

<p>Solitary Confinement in Prison.</p>	<p><a href="#">House Bill 7637</a>  Representative Leonela Felix  Committee: <a href="#">House Judiciary</a></p> <p><a href="#">Senate Bill 2462</a>  Senator Jonathon Acosta  Committee: <a href="#">Senate Judiciary</a></p>	<p>Establishes the restrictive housing oversight committee for the purpose of monitoring the use of restrictive housing (solitary confinement), as well as disciplinary and administrative confinement at the department of corrections.</p>	<p>Human beings are social animals. Our brains are wired for connection; it's essential for our mental health. Conversely, the psychiatric risks of solitary confinement are well documented. Inmates in solitary confinement have experienced, "appetite and sleep disturbances, anxiety, panic, rage, loss of control, paranoia, hallucinations, and self-mutilations." Solitary confinement is recognized "as difficult to withstand; indeed, psychological stressors such as isolation can be as clinically distressing as physical torture." Its</p>	<p>House Bill 7637 was heard in committee on April 11, 2024 and held for study.</p> <p>Senate Bill 2462 has not yet been heard in committee.</p>
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			negative effects last long after inmates return to the community.	
Olmstead Plan for Rhode Islanders at risk of unnecessary institutionalization	<p><a href="#">House Bill 7821</a> Rep. David Bennett Committee: <a href="#">House Health and Human Services</a></p> <p><a href="#">Senate Bill 2618</a> Sen. Louis DiPalma Committee: <a href="#">Senate Health and Human Services</a></p>	Creates a commission of state, community stakeholders and people with disabilities to draft a permanent, renewable, data-driven Olmstead Plan.	States that want to demonstrate their intention to comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act and U.S. Supreme Court ruling known as Olmstead v L.C. develop Olmstead Plans. Plans help states assess the supply and demand of resources needed to prevent the unnecessary institutionalization of people with disabilities, older adults, and youth with emotional disturbances.	<p>House Bill 7821 was heard in committee and held for study on March 12, 2024.</p> <p>Senate Bill 2618 was heard in committee and held for study on April 11, 2024.</p>
Health and Human	<a href="#">House Bill 8078</a> and	House Bill 8078	These two bills aim to	Neither bill has been



<p>Services Workforce Development</p>	<p><a href="#">House Bill 8079</a> Rep. Teresa Tanzi  Committee: <a href="#">House Finance</a></p>	<p>implements a grant program to fund public or private partnerships that provide opportunities for healthcare paraprofessionals to pursue higher education degrees and health professional licensure.</p> <p>House Bill 8079 increases the annual appropriation for the Health Professional Loan Repayment Program from one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to one million dollars (\$1,000,000).)</p>	<p>strengthen and expand our health and human services workforce by supporting students and professionals in the field. If passed and funded, the bills will help to stabilize the system and reduce waitlists for services.</p>	<p>heard in committee yet.</p>
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