

House Committee on Health & Human Services
State of Rhode Island General Assembly

March 13, 2025
Testimony in Support of H-5625

Dear Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Please think back to when either you or a loved one had either strep throat or scarlet fever. Perhaps the bodily symptoms become apparent & readily passed. However, neurological ones such as obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) can hide, linger, and become debilitating if left untreated.

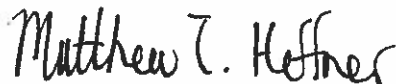
This concern is not merely academic. Untreated Anxiety/OCD affected my academic performance on high-stress tests, including the SAT. It interfered with my ability to develop friendships as a kid, and it stopped a budding romantic relationship in its tracks more than once.

Despite my family's ability to pay for treatment, I could not find proper treatment for my Anxiety/OCD disorder until my mid-20s. I distinctly remember needing to pay \$800 for an appointment between my referral to outpatient treatment at Butler Hospital and its beginning; after the initial shock, I immediately thought of how many people could not afford to pay for just that one appointment, let alone full treatment.

When I finally started outpatient treatment at Butler Hospital, I noticed multiple peers who traced their OCD back to physical sickness. I now think about whether their symptoms began as children who contracted strep throat or scarlet fever, but whose symptoms began before the initial legislation's enactment. It upsets me to think that an inability to pay for treatment might have prolonged their suffering, and could do the same for children if mandated coverage is allowed to expire.

Although I am happy to say that OCD no longer interferes with my life, the same cannot be said for many people. No one deserves psychological distress from contracting strep throat, least of all children because their parents cannot pay for treatment. Removing this sunset provision will prevent this injustice and allow more children to live freer and fuller lives. Thank you for both your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Matthew T. Heffner