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March 18, 2025

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan
Chair, House Health and Human Services Committee
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for H5432

Chair Donovan and Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H5432, which would prohibit health insurance providers from requiring preauthorization for in-network mental health or substance use disorder services

My name is Ben Lessing, I am CEO of Community Care Alliance. CCA is a behavioral health and social service organization delivering over 50 programs to support individuals, children and families in Woonsocket, throughout Northern RI and across the state. We employ over 600 professionals including social workers, psychiatrists, substance use counselors, case managers, peer support specialists, teachers, nurses, residential counselors, and more. CCA has served RI since 1892 and is committed to serving and supporting individuals and families in a comprehensive, collaborative manner to address their economic and overall well-being.

CCA is a state certified CCBHC (Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic) serving Northern RI, providing a comprehensive range of mental health and substance use services to all that are seeking care, regardless of diagnosis and insurance status. With over 50 years of experience in behavioral health, we understand the urgency of immediate access to services. Our experience is that prior authorization processes are an economic device used to delay and ration care, adding nothing of value to the quality of services. This bill is designed to remove barriers, so that when an individual chooses to access treatment, they will not face administrative delays. Accessibility to services when an individual is ready is a critical variable to successful outcomes.

I greatly appreciate your consideration.

Respectfully,

Benedict F. Lessing, Jr. MSW
President and CEO