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To: Honorable Representative Susan R. Donovan, Chairwoman
and Members of the House Health & Human Services Committee,
Rhode Island Legislature

Re: House Bill 6061 (Mental Health Parity Legislation)

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and
Members of the House Health & Human Services Committee:

I am an Expressive Psychotherapist with LMHC licenses in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island. I currently have clients in both states. I'm writing in support of the mental health parity legislation being proposed for Rhode Island.

Massachusetts passed a similar bill several years ago. What this means for my clients is that whether they have commercial insurance, MassHealth public insurance, or the state's indemnity plan insurance, they are entitled to the same benefits for their mental health needs as for their medical and physical needs.

As a mental health counselor, I have worked in many varied settings: inpatient, partial hospitalization, intensive outpatient, addiction recovery support, and in outpatient private practice, which is my current setting. What I have observed is that support for mental health has a huge impact on medical health and vice versa. When people are confronted with mental health issues, they may not sufficiently take good care of their physical health; when they are trying to cope with medical issues, having mental health support is crucial and sometimes critical. Cancer diagnoses, cardiac issues, chronic physical illness take their toll on a person's mental health. Trauma and burnout in our society are rampant as well, and those issues can influence a person's choice of using harmful substances as a way to cope with those life situations. To treat a person holistically, all aspects of care are important.

Therefore, I urge you to pass House Bill 6061 for the people of Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Janna M. Frelich