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ARTICLE 23

RELATING TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND HOSPITALS

SECTION 1. Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Direct Service Professionals Workforce Crisis.

WHEREAS, An estimated 4,400 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities are supported by the state in community-based settings; direct service professionals (DSPs) and job coaches, are trained staff that are engaged in activities of daily living and community/employment support; these employees earn wages that place them and their families below the poverty level; and

WHEREAS, the average DSP wage in Rhode Island is approximately \$11 per hour, which is below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty threshold for a family of 4; this workforce is often compelled to work many overtime hours or maintain a second job to support their families; many have to rely on public benefits such as Medicaid and food stamps, creating additional expenditures for state government; and

WHEREAS, RI has increased the minimum wage for the general workforce from \$7.40 in 2012 to \$9.60 in 2016, for a 30% increase in five years. During the corresponding period, direct support professionals (DSP) and personal care attendants (PCA) have seen their combined average wages move from \$10.65 to \$10.82, or increase by 1.6% over 5 years. Our neighboring states of Massachusetts and Connecticut saw increases in the minimum wage of 20% (to \$10 in 2016) and 16% (to \$9.60 in 2016) respectively. Over the same 5-year period, these 2 states increased their DSP/PCA wage by 7% (to \$13.02) and 8% (to \$12.19) respectively, compared with RI's \$10.82 per hour wage. And, Massachusetts has committed to compensate their DSPs with a \$15.00/hour wage by 2018, and

WHEREAS, The lack of adequate wages for DSP employees who perform the challenging work of supporting persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities results in high employee turnover, estimated at 33% in RI; higher wages are proven to reduce staff turnover, improving stability and quality of services while reducing employer training costs; and

WHEREAS, Rising wages in several other sectors now mean, despite strenuous efforts to recruit new DSP workers and job coaches, agencies are experiencing staff vacancy rates of up to 25%; excessive vacancies force employers to rely more on overtime, leading to staff burnout and

1 driving up costs; this growing hiring crisis impedes the ability of community agencies to implement
2 the state's obligations under the 2014 US Department of Justice Disabilities Act RI Settlement
3 Agreement, now, therefore, be it

4 RESOLVED, The Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Development Disabilities and
5 Hospitals shall institute a one-time increase in the base-payment rates for licensed developmental
6 disability organizations, in amount to be determined by the appropriations process, for the purpose
7 of raising wages for direct support professionals and job coaches that is implemented: (i) by
8 October 1, 2017, and (ii) in a manner that meets specifications related to implementation and
9 reporting approved by the director of the department of behavioral healthcare, developmental
10 disabilities and hospitals and secretary of health and human services, and be it further

11 RESOLVED, The Office of Internal Audit within the Office of Management and Budget
12 shall conduct a vender compliance audit review after the implementation of the increase in base-
13 rate payments in accordance with this resolution.

14 SECTION 2. This article shall take effect upon passage.