



# Child & Family

Caring for our Rhode Island Community since 1866

March 2023

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Greetings,

As you know, the past few years have been challenging for everyone. **Services provided by Child & Family have never been in such demand as they are right now, with waitlists in every single one of our programs.** Between the pandemic, the housing crisis, and inflation, the most vulnerable population in our community desperately needs our help.

A variety of legislation has been introduced on major insurance reform, seeking to raise the minimum hourly rate for those providing direct service to \$25 per hour and providing bridge contract increases until rate setting is in place. We should recognize and support House Bill 5987, which would provide an approximate 10% increase in contract rates and bridge the funding until rates are set next year. The bill is sponsored by Representatives Casimiro, Spears, Noret, Baginski, and Morales. If you live in these legislators' districts, be sure to reach out and say thank you. Soon, Senator DiPalma will introduce a similar bill in the Senate.

Other major legislation has not emerged at this time in the session. I ask all Board, staff, and community members who support our mission to reach out to their Senator and Representative and let them know how short- and long-term rate support is critical to our workforce and those we serve.

Please see the [attached](#) legislative toolkit from the Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families (RICCF) and mark your calendars for an in-person rally at the State House on Thursday, April 20<sup>th</sup> at 3 PM. The rally is intended to promote bridge funding. There will be a press event in the library as well as an opportunity to go on the floor of the House and Senate with staff and clients. House and Senate hearings are also scheduled for that evening.

I see positive signs that we are very slowly recovering from the pandemic, but let me share a few examples of why we need to make additional investments now. Recently, we had to notify 18 working families that we had to temporarily close a preschool classroom due to staffing shortages in our Sandpipers Early Learning Center. I personally review the referrals we receive in our Foster Care program. My heart hurts when, every day, we try to match traumatized and neglected children from the child welfare system with too few foster parents. Children are waiting in emergency rooms, psychiatric hospitals, and residential treatment programs because our foster-care capacity has shrunk to half of what we had pre-pandemic. Additional funding alone will not solve these problems, but adequate funding will allow Child & Family to support our workforce and foster parents better. We all need to hold our legislators and government policymakers accountable for the design and effectiveness of our health and human services system.

Thank you in advance for your continued support, and please reach out if you have any questions,

Marty Sinnott  
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