



Rhode Island Speech and Hearing Association

March 9, 2025

Chair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee  
Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: S0051 (Physical therapy copay bill)

Dear Chairperson Murray and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Speech and Hearing Association (RISHA), I write to express our strong appeal for the AMENDMENT of S0051 as it is currently written. This bill limits copays, coinsurance, or office deductibles for the services of a physical therapist to the amount authorized for the services of a primary care physician or osteopath on or after January 1, 2026. As in the past, we recognize our Physical Therapy colleagues for proposing this bill which would offer improved access to rehabilitation services for Rhode Islanders. However, we respectfully request that the bill be amended to include Occupational Therapy and Speech-Language Pathology in addition to Physical Therapy. **Without that language, RISHA opposes S0051.**

RISHA's mission is to support the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology in the state of Rhode Island through advocacy, public awareness, and professional development on behalf of its members and the individuals they serve.

RISHA is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals with communication and related disorders by providing continuing education, advocacy, and professional support for speech-language pathologists and audiologists in Rhode Island. Our members work in schools, medical facilities, rehabilitation centers, early intervention programs, private practice, universities, and other agencies, serving people of all ages who have communication disorders.

Please consider the following: Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Speech Therapy are parallel rehabilitation professions. Each provides an important and equally valuable service to consumers and should be managed similarly with copays. Many clients receive multiple services at the same time and will incur multiple copays. Lower copays encourage individuals to pursue needed services and better allow those on fixed or lower incomes to complete a full course of therapy. If one profession's copays are at a lower rate than the others, there is an incentive for clients to seek out only that service though they may need a different one or a combination for optimal outcomes. This bill passed as it is currently written would harm

individuals who need a whole-person, person-centered approach to care such as individuals with traumatic brain injury, stroke, and dementia.

The inclusion of all three major rehabilitation services in this legislation demonstrates equity and provides for optimal choice to consumers. Reduction of copays is an important change that affords better access to all rehabilitation services and should be actively pursued. RISHA believes we can all agree that there has been an observed trend of gradually increasing deductibles and copays. Some of these increases essentially negate having insurance because they are so high. This causes many clients to have to decide between seeking rehabilitation services and meeting basic personal or household needs. This is not a choice anyone should have to make for themselves or their families when trying to recover from an illness, injury, surgery, or other health challenge. A revised S0051 including all therapies would help to alleviate this. RISHA urges the committee to consider amended language as requested and, once in place, to pass this bill in order to support the health and wellness of Rhode Islanders by easier access to Rehabilitation Services.

Thank you for your consideration of RISHA's position on S0051. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Allan B. Shaw, RISHA President, at [allanbshawslp@gmail.com](mailto:allanbshawslp@gmail.com)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Allan B. Shaw', enclosed within a large, loopy oval shape.

Allan B. Shaw, MS, CCC-SLP  
Speech-Language Pathologist  
RISHA President

P.O. Box 8317  
Cranston, Rhode Island 02920