Recent Regional Conference Showcases Innovation, Leadership and Workforce Support

By: Naomi Cotrone, Vice President

The 15th Annual New England Home Care & Hospice Conference and Trade Show, held April 15–17, 2025, in Portland, Maine, drew hundreds of professionals from across the region, including a robust delegation from Rhode Island. Hosted at the Holiday Inn By the Bay, this year's conference centered on advancing care through innovation, strengthening leadership and supporting the vital home care, home health and hospice workforce.

The conference opened with a dynamic Washington Update by **Dr. Steven Landers** from the National Alliance for Care at Home who provided critical insights into evolving federal policies impacting home care. Keynote speakers inspired and challenged attendees to rethink leadership and resilience in today's health care landscape. **Dr. Bridget Cooper** energized the audience with her session, "*3 Keys to Staying Unflappable*," offering practical strategies for leading teams through adversity. **Jack Stahlmann**, in his talk "*The Upside,*" shared stories of courage and perseverance among frontline workers during the pandemic. Meanwhile, **Gina Mazza** and **Rey Spadoni** discussed how agencies can not only weather industry turbulence, but thrive amid it. Two standout workshops generated significant interest from Rhode Island attendees. In "*Home Care Worker Safety: What's Lurking in Your Blind Spot?*" **Barbara Citarella, RN, BSN, MS, CHCE, NHDP-BC**, provided a deep dive into staff safety and situational awareness in the field. Her engaging, practical approach highlighted new threats and mitigation strategies tailored to the home care environment. Another highlight was "*Artificial Intelligence in Home Care: Where Do We Go from Here?*" which explored the rapidly expanding role of AI in operations, clinical decision-making and patient and client engagement. The session emphasized how agencies of all sizes can harness AI tools responsibly to enhance care delivery and efficiency.

The bustling trade show hall featured more than 60 exhibitors showcasing the latest in clinical tools, operational technology, staffing solutions and patient and client care innovations. Attendees had the opportunity to connect directly with vendors, demo new products and discover partnerships that can help elevate their home care company's services. The energy on the exhibit floor reflected the industry's commitment to continuous improvement and adaptation in a changing healthcare environment.

With over a dozen breakout sessions and up to 9 CEUs available, participants returned home with new strategies, tools and relationships to strengthen their organizations. From leadership development to compliance updates and workforce resilience, the 2025 conference proved to be one of the most impactful yet.

Save the Date! The 2026 New England Home Care & Hospice Conference and Trade Show will take place **May 4–6, 2026, at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Manchester, New Hampshire**.

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SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER

Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care

Advancing quality healthcare at home

Home Care Industry Impact

Engaging State Legislative Leadership on Critical Budget and Policy Proposals

By: Bethany Skinner, President

The Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care recently met with several leaders within the General Assembly, including House Finance Chairman Marvin Abney, to advocate for essential policy provisions affecting Medicaid home care, as the General Assembly deliberates on the 2026 state budget. The meeting and subsequent committee hearings underscored the urgency of safeguarding access to quality home-based care while stabilizing the direct care workforce.

At the top of The Partnership's agenda is the inclusion of **House Bill 5774** and **Senate Bill 255** in the 2026 budget. Sponsored by Representative Patricia Serpa and Senator Mark McKenney, these companion bills would establish a **Medicaid home care rate floor**, ensuring that managed care organizations (MCOs), such as Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, United Healthcare, Tufts Health Plan and Blue Cross blue Shield of Rhode Island, cannot undercut rates set by the General Assembly. This protection is vital for maintaining provider financial viability and supporting frontline workforce wages. The bills also preserve a **$1.56 per hour rate enhancement** for providers that meet a 30% workforce threshold of CNAs and homemakers who complete a 30-hour behavioral health training program through Rhode Island College. Without these provisions included in the budget, providers that have made significant workforce investments risk being forced to cut wages on **July 1, 2025**. Cutting wages will jeopardize both care quality and staff retention.

The Partnership also urged the removal of language within **Article 8, Sections 5 and 9** of the Governor's budget proposal that would sunset the **Medicaid Home Care Cost Inflation Factor** (CIF). This year's CIF was recently calculated by the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), which houses the Medicaid Program, at 7.61%. The CIF is a critical policy that offsets the inadequacies in wage benchmarking used by the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC), whose biennial rate review compares Rhode Island's wages to a broad New England average, rather than more accurate comparisons like Massachusetts and Connecticut. Eliminating the CIF would severely impact home care providers' ability to offer competitive wages, risking further workforce attrition, pushing more residents into institutional settings and ultimately increasing costs to the state. **Receiving a 7.61% rate increase at this time would help bring in and retain more staff**.

A third concern discussed was the proposed elimination of the **Certificate of Need (CoN)** requirement for home care, home nursing care, and hospice provider licensure under Article 10, Section 1. Rhode Island is experiencing rapid and unprecedented growth in home care licensure applications, including 33 last quarter and 16 more this quarter, raising concerns about the Rhode Island Department of Health's oversight capacity. History has shown that removing CoN without adequate safeguards leads to unchecked growth and declining care quality. The Partnership recommended establishing a **study commission** to evaluate the impact of CoN and the Governor's rationale, rather than **repeating past policy mistakes when CoN was eliminated in 1998 and subsequently restored in 2011**.

Finally, The Partnership advocated for eliminating outdated **2021 P.L. 162 reporting requirements** for Medicaid-contracted home care providers. The wage pass-through reporting, initially implemented to track CNA and homemaker shift differentials, is now obsolete following rate increases in 2025 that absorbed this wage enhancement. Maintaining this reporting requirement creates unnecessary administrative burdens for both providers and the EOHHS, with no added benefit to state oversight or policy.

As budget negotiations continue, The Partnership will remain fully engaged with legislative leaders and state agencies to ensure Rhode Island's home care sector is funded and regulated in ways that protect patients, support the workforce and ensure long-term sustainability. **We encourage every home care provider to become informed and engaged as these actions impact your company's cash flow and the stability of your employees**. Contact The Partnership at (401) 351-1010 to learn how.

The Clock Is Ticking: Rhode Island's Healthcare Crisis Demands Real Action, Not Lip Service

By: Nicholas Oliver, MPA, CAE, Executive Director

Rhode Island is in the midst of a healthcare crisis. For those of us in the home care industry, we already know that the alarm bells are deafening. The recent closure of Anchor Medical Associates, one of the state's largest primary care practices, is not just a headline—it's a warning shot! Thousands of patients have been left scrambling to find care. Providers are overwhelmed and the very infrastructure that is meant to keep people healthy, stable at home and in their community and remain out of hospitals is cracking under the weight of subpar action.

Rhode Island Attorney General Peter Neronha could not have put it more clearly at the end of April following a press conference by Governor Daniel McKee and members of his cabinet that oversee our state's healthcare system:

"We are in crisis. And some of us have been sounding the alarm for years. Our residents don't want bureaucratic nonsense and Tuesday-morning lip-service; they want and need quality health care. We need a consistent data-driven, multi-pronged, and innovative approach now that will help us achieve long-term structural reform and will immediately help us avoid the worst of this crisis before it's too late. Because it almost is."

He's right. And yet, home care remains on the margins of the state's health policy conversations, even as we serve as the safety net for aging adults, individuals with disabilities and people recovering from illness or injury. Every week, we hear about patients who can not be discharged from hospitals or avoid long-term care facilities simply because there is not enough home care staff or service capacity to meet their needs. Despite this, and with due respect to Governor McKee and his team, budget decisions being made right now continue to overlook home and community-based programs in favor of more vocal, better-organized institutional groups like hospitals, nursing homes and community health centers. Where is the strategic investment in care that keeps people at home and reduces long-term costs for the state?

What's worse, home care providers are facing the dual pressure of rising operational costs and the expiration of federal pandemic recovery funds. As resources shrink, we are being forced to fight for our place in the state budget, often up against organizations with larger lobbies and louder voices. This is unsustainable and it's unacceptable.

That's why I'm calling on home care provider administrators and owners across Rhode Island to step up. No one can afford to sit on the sidelines. If we want to protect our workforce, preserve access for our patients and clients and strengthen our industry within the healthcare sector, we need to have a stronger position at the table by having a larger number of participants in the home care industry testifying at hearings, talking to lawmakers and demanding accountability. The only way we will be prioritized is if we show up and speak up in large numbers.

We are the answer to many of the problems plaguing Rhode Island's healthcare system. But without bold advocacy and decisive leadership, we risk being left behind while others divide your piece of the pie. The window to act is closing fast! Let's not wait until it's too late.

new benefit for **members**

Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care Offers POSH Compliance Platform as Member Benefit

POLSINELLI ONLINE SOLUTIONS

The Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care has partnered with Polsinelli Online Solutions for Home Care (POSH) to provide its members with **FREE** access to POSH's comprehensive compliance platform. Founded in 2021, POSH supports home care, home health and hospice companies with accessible, up-to-date resources tailored to evolving legal requirements with a one-stop source for legal and regulatory resources, including state-specific forms, policies and guidance.

POSH resources include:

- Legal documents and compliance tools
- Employment law summaries and handbooks for all 50 states
- Licensing guides and background check tools
- Templates for client and employee interactions
- Access to industry-specific events and updates

This proactive move—purchasing a POSH subscription for **every Provider Member at no additional cost**—underscores The Partnership's commitment to regulatory compliance and member support to home care, home health and hospice companies. It also sets a precedent for other state home care and hospice associations.

take action now!

Protect Home-Based Care: Two Major Threats in the Governor's SFY26 Budget

https://tinyurl.com/RIPHC252

Restore the Behavioral Health Training Program and Preserve the Wage Enhancement

https://tinyurl.com/RIPHCBH25

annual PAC fundraiser **photos**

On March 6, 2025 Members rallied at IronWorks in Warwick for the annual fundraiser.

Past President Vincent Ward urges home care providers to take action.

Fellow members sharing advocacy experiences.

Nicholas Oliver, Executive Director presented the state of legislation for this year and the challenges The Partnership is facing at the State House and In DC.

Nicholas Oliver and lobbyist Jack Hutson were on hand to answer questions.

Opportunity for networking following the presentation.

Leaders in Home Care

Provider Members

A Caring Experience Nursing Services
Abraham Home Care Provider
Access Healthcare
Amivie
Assured Quality Homecare, LLC
BAYADA Home Health Care
Capitol Home Care Network
Comfort Home Care Services
Dependable Healthcare Services, LLC
Family Trusted Care
Global Homecare and Staffing
Good Hands of RI
Good Shepard Home Care, LLC
Health Care Services
Healthy Babies Happy Moms Inc.
HomeCare Advantage
HomeCare Networks
Home Health & Hospice Care of Nursing Placement
Independence Health Services
Lifetime Medical Support Services
LongLife Home Care
Nurse on Call
Ocean State Nursing Services
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Would you like for your company to be recognized as a leader in home care? Contact Nicholas Oliver at (401) 351-1010 to learn how.