



March 20, 2026

The Honorable Representative Joseph M. McNamara
Chair of the House Education Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for House Bill 7026 - Nathan Bruno and Jason Flatt Act Amendment

Dear Chairman McNamara and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Mental Health Association of Rhode Island's support for House Bill 7026, which would require middle and high schools that issue student identification cards to include on the cards crisis lines for suicide prevention and substance use disorder prevention.

In 2023, over 300 Rhode Island high school students reported having seriously considered attempting suicide in the last year. 266 of those students made a plan, and 181 made one attempt or more. Substance use also continues to be a concern: about 18% of students reported drinking alcohol in the last 30 days, and about 20% said they used marijuana in the last month.¹

It is clear that our youth are struggling, and that resources like suicide prevention hotlines can save the lives of hundreds. Spreading awareness of those hotlines, and normalizing their use, needs to be a priority when considering youth well-being. Providing a life-saving phone number on ID cards would reach the largest number of people with the lowest cost. This method of marketing could save Rhode Island countless dollars that would be used on awareness campaigns. The increased use of prevention hotlines also saves money in emergency services.²

It would be a tragedy to allow Rhode Island youth to struggle alone with suicidal ideation or substance misuse due to not knowing where to turn. This legislation can be the difference between a student ending their life, or waking up the next day. By printing prevention hotlines on school ID cards, we have the ability to save lives while saving money both short and long term.

¹ <https://health.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur1006/files/materialbyothers/vrbs/2023HighSchoolDetailTables.pdf>

² <https://988lifeline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2015-Follow-up-OnePage.pdf>

For these reasons, MHARI supports this legislation. Thank you for your consideration of our views. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Laura Shank

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