



May 1, 2024

Rep. Marvin L. Abney, Chair
House Finance Committee
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support of H-7204 to support work of primary care and patients

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Care Transformation Collaborative of Rhode Island (CTC-RI) – the state's health system transformation organization focused on primary care – and our Pediatric Division, PCMH Kids, I write in strong support of H-7204. The bill amends RI's existing Healthcare Services Funding Plan Act by adding an account relating to a new Psychiatry Resource Network to fund RI's present PediPRN and MomsPRN.

Our diverse Board of Directors and large group of stakeholders represent over 800 adult and pediatric primary care providers who serve over 700,000 Rhode Islanders. As a nonprofit, public/private partnership, CTC-RI works to lead the transformation of primary care in Rhode Island in the context of an integrated health care system; and to improve the quality of care, the patient experience of care, the affordability of care and the health of the populations we serve.

PediPRN and MomsPRN are programs we have worked closely to support, and have been vital to supporting primary care pediatricians, family doctors, and obstetricians as they screen for depression, anxiety, and substance use in children, youth, and pregnant people, and expand our primary care ability to manage or co-manage patients with behavioral health concerns.

PediPRN and MomsPRN provide primary care practitioners with real-time telephonic support for psychiatric advice for managing psychiatric medications, making behavior health diagnoses, and connecting patients with higher levels of support when needed. **Given the current crisis in children's mental health as well as the increasing awareness of behavioral health needs of pregnant people, this service has been invaluable.** PediPRN has not only supported pediatricians, but through such support, has increased the confidence and capability of primary care providers to care for behavioral health needs within their practices, with less need to refer out to the community mental health providers who often have limited availability or long waiting lists.

Support for behavioral health needs of pregnant people is also critical. In RI, nearly 50% of maternal morbidity is related to behavioral health. It is critical that health care professionals identify and treat needs during pregnancy and in the postpartum period. This ability is supported and facilitated by MomsPRN. A primary care provider recently shared their insight and experience using MomsPRN:

*"When a patient comes in after they had the baby, already at postpartum, and we identify them as a depression, right there, especially if they're Spanish speaking, we know we're going to need help faster. **We call MomsPRN right at the moment** when the patient is still in the office, and we try to get them **scheduled**. And if we can get them scheduled right there, and have them on the phone with them, we get everything cleared out the same day!"*

MomsPRN and PediPRN have been able to drastically support and change lives of primary care patients, while giving our primary care workforce the support they need through the accessible teleconsultation line. I encourage you to please support H-7204 being heard before you today, investing in these two important resources for the health of Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Debra Hurwitz, MBA, BSN, RN Executive Director, CTC-RI

Dear Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee:

I am writing in support of House Bill # 7204.

The Healthcare Services Funding Care Plan Act will provide necessary funding for healthcare for Rhode Island's children and Adults.

The passage of **H 7204** would add a new account, relating to a new Psychiatry Resource Network to fund Rhode Island's PEDI-PRN, MOMS-PRN as well as, similar programs to be added in the future.

Thank you for your time.

Kerri Cassino

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