

# American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



## Rhode Island Chapter

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#### **Mailing Address:**

American Academy of Pediatrics  
Rhode Island Chapter  
PO Box 20365  
Cranston, RI 02920

To: House Finance Committee

From: Michelle Beller, MD

Date: April 30, 2025

Re: Support for H5461, The Healthcare Services Funding Plan Act

Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

I am a primary care pediatrician at Barrington Pediatric Associates and a member of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (RIAAP), whom I represent with this letter. I support the proposed legislation to provide a permanent funding stream to sustain the MomsPRN and PediPRN programs. This is in line with the Right from the Start Campaign's priorities for supporting the mental health of children.

As a pediatrician, I care for patients with a variety of mental health challenges. Access to child psychiatrists is limited, so, without proper training in medical school and residency, I am prescribing psychiatric medications for increasingly complex patients. PediPRN has been an essential resource for me and my colleagues in these instances.

For example, I recently consulted PediPRN for a patient with ADHD. I had been prescribing medication for her attention/focus at school, but she was continuing to struggle with emotional lability and sleep challenges. PediPRN helped guide my decision making for medication changes with excellent results. Had I not had access to PediPRN, I would not have felt comfortable continuing to manage this patient's medication, and would have referred her to a child psychiatrist. This would have delayed care and **increased health care costs**.

Sustaining this program will allow me to continue to use this resource regularly as I navigate through this era of increased frequency and severity of mental health needs in children. Our country is in the midst of a mental health crisis with increased rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide among our children and teens. PediPRN gives pediatricians an opportunity to work with child psychiatrists to safely provide the quality care that our patients deserve.

Thank you for reviewing my testimony and considering my recommendation to pass this legislation.

Sincerely,

Michelle Beller, MD, FAAP

Gregory Fox, MD, FAAP

Advocacy Chair

Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics