



April 30, 2025

The Honorable Representative Chairman Abney  
Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee  
Room 35 - State House  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: **In Support H5461**

Dear Chairman Representative Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of the H5461- Healthcare Services Funding Plan Act**. My name is Beth Bixby, and I am the CEO of Tides Family Services, an agency that has spent nearly four decades walking alongside Rhode Island's most vulnerable youth and families—who receive behavioral health, home preservation or re-entry services. Our agency serves approximately 1,300 families each year, many of whom have significant mental and behavioral health challenges.

This legislation amends the existing healthcare services funding plan act by adding an account relating to funding the Rhode Island Department of Health psychiatry resource network (PRN) in order to fund Rhode Island's present PediPRN and MomsPRN, as well as similar programs which may be added by regulation in the future.

As you know, the Rhode Island Psychiatry Resource Network (PRN) is a statewide teleconsultation resource for medical providers composed two programs: RI MomsPRN, which serves providers treating pregnant and postpartum patients, and PediPRN, which serves primary care providers treating children and adolescents. Both programs provide medical professionals with access to consultations with licensed mental health professionals to assist them in treating the mental health concerns of their patients. These phone lines give healthcare providers treating pregnant, postpartum, or pediatric patients real-time clinical consultations with specialty psychiatrists to discuss patient diagnosis, treatment planning, medication safety, and referral support.

At a time when our families face significant mental health and behavioral health issues, and our health care system is challenged by the lack of mental health providers, this service is critical. The utilization of the PRN by a primary care physician allows him or her to



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consult with a licensed mental health professional in a timely manner. The primary care physician is then potentially able to make a diagnosis, prescribe medication, and provide the necessary care. The patient has the opportunity to receive the care they need, bypassing long waiting lists which would only increase their mental health challenges.

The Department of Health initially received federal grant funding for creation of the Rhode Island Psychiatric Resource Network, which includes the two consultation lines, however that funding ended in 2024. The General Assembly passed legislation last legislative session to allow for the EOHHS Medicaid program to provide time limited funding. A sustainable state -level funding source is necessary to ensure the continuation of both the RI Moms Psychiatric Resource Network and the Pedi Psychiatric Resource Network.

I strongly support this legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further and am available to provide any additional input needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth A. Bixby, LICSW

CEO, Tides Family Services