

April 30, 2025

RE: In Support of HB5461- An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government- The Health Services Funding Plan Act (PRN)

Chairman Abney, Vice Chairs Slater and Marszalkowski, and members of the House Finance Committee,

The Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families brings together forty-four direct service and allied advocacy organizations to address critical issues facing children, youth, and families in Rhode Island including family instability, out of home placement, behavioral health, family and sexual violence and more. We support HB5461 which would fund the Psychiatric Resource Networks currently in place through Moms-PRN and Pedi-PRN, both of which are valuable resources for pediatric and prenatal practices.

Importance of Addressing the Safety, Health, and Success of Rhode Island Children and Youth

In October 2024, RICCF released the report “Children in Crisis Can’t Wait: The Case for System Transformation.”ⁱ We noted that children of all ages are experiencing behavioral health crises, as evidenced by insurance claims and hospitalization data:

- 18% of Medicaid eligible toddlers aged 2-3 have a behavioral health claim.
- Youth aged 6-18 have 44,100 behavioral health claims.ⁱⁱ

Rhode Islanders continue to have difficulty accessing the services that children and families need. There is more stress on overloaded hospitals and emergency services that have already been strained from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our state will continue to send children to costly out-of-state programs away from their families or place them in higher levels of in-state care than they need if prevention focused programs like Rhode Island’s Psychiatry Resource Network Program do not have stable funding.

PRN Programs Help Increase Access to Mental Healthcare Amidst Shortages

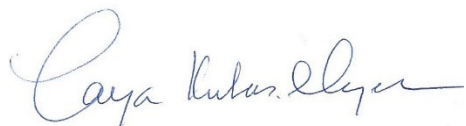
PRN programs help the state avoid the costly practice of waiting until challenges escalate to the point of hospitalization by better connecting busy frontline prenatal and pediatric providers to specialty mental health clinicians at Bradley Hospital and Women & Infants Hospital who offer same day specialized clinical consultations and resource/referral services. These clinical services available statewide allow healthcare providers to comprehensively care for their patients promptly and avoid wait times for specialized care. These PRN programs also improve access to mental health care in primary care practices by offering extensive professional development and training programs. This service has helped our member organizations- including Comprehensive Community Action Program and Tri-County Community Action Agency increase mental healthcare for their perinatal patients.

Support Legislation to Sustain PRN Mental Health Services for Providers

The Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families urges support for this important legislation to sustain both PRN programs. As you know, we are committed to the development of a seamless

system of behavioral health beginning with the identification of issues as early as possible, and believe PRN programs play a critical role in meeting this goal. We urge your support of HB5461.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Tanja Kubas-Meyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tanja Kubas-Meyer
Executive Director

¹ Children in Crisis Can't Wait- The Case for System Transformation (<https://www.riccf.org/data-publications>)

ⁱⁱ Rhode Island Children's Cabinet. (2024). Children's Cabinet slide deck. Retrieved from <http://kids.ri.gov/cabinet/documents/presentations/02-29->
