



Hasbro Children's Hospital

The Pediatric Division of Rhode Island Hospital

Lifespan. Delivering health with care.

Department of Pediatrics
ChildSafe/PANDA

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May 20, 2025

House Finance Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
State House
Providence, RI

RE: Support for H5527– Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) for Children and Youth

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

We see firsthand the growing crisis in pediatric behavioral health. Each day, children and adolescents in severe emotional distress come through our doors—many of whom do not need hospitalization, but rather immediate, community-based support. Unfortunately, due to a lack of alternative options, families often have no choice but to bring their child to the emergency room, even when it may not be the best setting for them.

The consequences of this are severe:

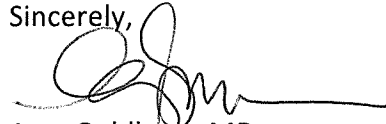
- Emergency rooms are overwhelmed with behavioral health cases, forcing long wait times for all patients.
- Children in crisis often wait days or even weeks for appropriate placement, leading to further emotional distress.
- Hospitals struggle with limited psychiatric beds, meaning that children who could have been stabilized at home end up boarding in the ER for prolonged periods, sometimes without receiving the care they truly need.

H5527 offers a proven solution through a statewide Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) program. Tides Family Services and Family Service of Rhode Island have trained behavioral health professionals to respond directly to children in crisis—where they are, when they need it. Instead of coming to the emergency room, these children receive immediate de-escalation, crisis stabilization, and follow-up care in their home, school, or community.

Since October 2022, MRSS teams have served over 1,300 Rhode Island children and successfully diverted more than 90% from hospitalization. This has significantly reduced unnecessary ER visits, improved outcomes for families, and freed up hospital resources for those who truly need acute medical care.

We strongly urge the General Assembly to support H5527 to ensure that every Rhode Island child in crisis has access to the right care at the right time—before an emergency room visit becomes their only option.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy Goldberg', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Amy Goldberg, MD

Aubin Center

Hasbro Children's Hospital

Professor Pediatrics

Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University