



**TIDES FAMILY SERVICES**

**WE NEVER GIVE UP ON A KID... NEVER!**

215 Washington St.  
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Tidesfs.org

May 20, 2025

The Honorable Marvin Abney  
Chairman, House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

To: Chairman Marvin Abney and Members of House Finance Committee

From: Beth A. Bixby, MSW, LICSW

**RE: H5527 In Support**

Good afternoon, Chairman Abney and members of the committee.

My name is Beth Bixby, and I'm the Chief Executive Officer of Tides Family Services. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H5527, and I especially want to thank Representative Casimiro for her continued leadership on behalf of Rhode Island's children and families.

At Tides, we've had the privilege of serving as one of the lead agencies implementing Mobile Response and Stabilization Services, or MRSS, for the past two years. Let me tell you: this program works.

MRSS is not a hotline. It's not a referral. It is a boots-on-the-ground, 24/7 crisis response team that goes to a child's home, school, or community within one hour. Our teams include trained clinicians, family navigators, and peer support workers who are culturally competent and trauma-informed. We meet families in the moment of crisis—and we stay with them through stabilization and connection to longer-term care.

From October 2022 to January 2025, our partnership with FSRI served over 1,300 children, and diverted over 90% from psychiatric hospitalization. These are children who might otherwise have ended up in an emergency room, a police cruiser, or a hospital bed. Instead, they stayed in their homes, in their communities, and in their classrooms.

But here's the hard truth: we can't continue this work under a patchwork of temporary grants and inconsistent regional coverage. Our clinicians are on-call at all hours, in every corner of the state. Sustaining this workforce requires predictability, reimbursement, and recognition.

Right now, the service is fragile. We are being asked to operate an essential public safety net with no permanent structure, no guaranteed payment model, and no statewide coordination. That is not sustainable—and without action, we risk losing the very system that's been proven to work.



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H5527 is the solution. It provides:

- A clear timeline for submitting a State Plan Amendment to access Medicaid funds;
- A sustainable financing model that includes Medicaid, commercial insurance, and general revenue;
- And the infrastructure to make MRSS a permanent, statewide service, not a temporary pilot.

It also helps the state meet its obligations under the DCYF consent decree, and aligns with the Office of the Child Advocate's first recommendation in her most recent child fatality report: to make MRSS permanent and statewide.

We at Tides are proud to do this work. We're ready to keep doing it. But we need your partnership to ensure that children in crisis don't fall through the cracks.

Please support H5527. Let's take what we know works and make it last.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth A. Bixby, MSW, LICSW