



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,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter in strong support of H5527. This bill represents a critical step forward in creating a more integrated, comprehensive system of care that meets the unique needs of our state's children and families.

Currently, Rhode Island's behavioral health system for children remains fragmented across multiple agencies, creating unnecessary silos and barriers to access. This fragmentation not only delays care but also fails to address the interconnected needs of children and families in a holistic manner. H5527 seeks to address this by enhancing DCYF's statutory role to ensure that children's behavioral health services are coordinated across systems and agencies, offering a more cohesive and child-centered system of care.

DCYF is uniquely positioned to coordinate and integrate children's behavioral health services, given its existing mandate to support children and families in the state.

The bill's focus on improving coordination between agencies will help address children's challenges when navigating the current system. Effective coordination ensures that children receive early interventions, wraparound services, and community-based care that address their needs in the least restrictive setting possible. Moreover, research underscores the importance of early intervention in preventing more serious behavioral health issues in the future.

When families are engaged in treatment, and children receive care in familiar, supportive environments, outcomes improve, and long-term success is far more achievable. In this context, H5527 will enable DCYF to enhance further its ability to provide these services and ensure families are partners in their children's care.

Investing in children's behavioral health is vital for the long-term success of our state. However, despite the investments already made, treatment gaps and significant barriers to accessing care still exist. As of 2023, 733 children in Rhode Island were on waiting lists for mental health services, and many families continue to face long delays in receiving critical care. The lack of clear statutory guidance hampers DCYF's ability to coordinate care across agencies fully. Strengthening DCYF's oversight, as proposed in H5527, will help ensure that children are not lost in the cracks between state systems but receive the coordinated care and support they need when needed.



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I urge the Committee to pass H5527 and strengthen DCYF's role in overseeing children's behavioral health services. This bill is an essential step toward creating a more integrated, effective, and equitable care system for children and families across Rhode Island.

Thank you,
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