

**May 20, 2025**

Submitted by John J. Tassoni Jr.  
President & CEO, Substance Abuse Mental Health Leadership Council of Rhode Island  
House Finance Committee

Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Substance Use Mental Health Leadership Council of Rhode Island (SUMHLC) in strong **support of H5527**, the Children's Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS).

SUMHLC represents over 30 behavioral health and substance use treatment organizations across Rhode Island. Our members deliver essential care to some of the most vulnerable residents of our state—children, adults, and families who rely on timely, community-based behavioral health supports.

H5527 is essential legislation that will help us meet the needs of children and families before their challenges escalate into emergencies. Today, too many families are left with no option but to turn to emergency rooms when their child is in behavioral crisis—settings that are often ill-equipped to address the root of the crisis and far more costly.

The MRSS model is different. It's proactive, child-centered, and community-based. It ensures that a trained professional can meet families where they are—in their homes, schools, or communities—to de-escalate crises, stabilize the situation, and connect them with ongoing care. Since its pilot launch in 2022, MRSS has already proven successful:

- Over 1,300 youth have received MRSS services,
- 92% were diverted from psychiatric hospitalization,
- And the state saved over \$2.2 million by avoiding unnecessary emergency department use.

Despite these outcomes, MRSS remains dependent on temporary and fragmented funding. H5527 would change that by formally establishing MRSS in statute and creating a sustainable infrastructure to ensure every child—regardless of insurance status—has access to this life-saving intervention.

This bill is fiscally responsible, cost-effective, and aligned with national best practices. It maximizes federal Medicaid dollars, reduces costly high-end care, and supports families in the least restrictive, most developmentally appropriate setting possible.

On behalf of SUMHLC, I urge you to support H5527. This is a smart investment in children's behavioral health and in the long-term health of our state system.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Rhode Island's children and families.

Sincerely,

John J. Tassoni Jr.

President & CEO

Substance Abuse Mental Health Leadership Council of Rhode Island