



939 Waterman Avenue • East Providence, RI 02914

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

May 20, 2025

Dear Representative Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of all the Horizon Healthcare Partners (HHP), our collective staffs, our Board of Directors, and the clients we serve, **we submit this testimony today in support of H5527, the Children's Mobile Response and Stabilization Services Act.**

Community Care Alliance, Newport Mental Health, Thrive Behavioral Health, Tides Family Services, The Galilee Mission and CODAC are the six behavioral health and substance use organizations that comprise HHP. As you hopefully know, the HHP agencies provide critical mental health and substance use services to individuals and families that are most vulnerable in local communities across the state.

We submit written testimony today to urge you to support H5527. This critical legislation would establish a sustainable, statewide Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) program to address the growing behavioral health crises faced by Rhode Island's children and youth.

Each day, children and adolescents in severe emotional distress come through the doors of our community providers—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.

This leads to creating emergency rooms that are overwhelmed with behavioral health cases, forcing long wait times for all patients and children in crisis who often wait days or even weeks for appropriate placement, leading to further emotional distress. Additionally, hospitals struggle with limited psychiatric beds, meaning that children who could have been stabilized at home end up boarding in the Emergency Room, often without receiving the care they truly need.

H5527 offers a proven solution: a statewide MRSS program. Since October 2022, Tides Family Services and Family Service of Rhode Island have deployed trained behavioral health professionals to respond directly to children in crisis—where they are, when

they need it. Instead of relying on ERs, these children receive immediate de-escalation, crisis stabilization, and follow-up care in their home, school, or community.

MRSS is already making a difference:

- Over 1,300 children served statewide since October 2022.
- More than 90% successfully diverted from hospitalization.
- \$2.2 million saved in avoidable emergency room costs.

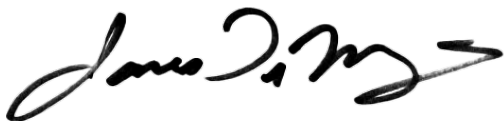
This program is working—but it is at risk. MRSS is currently funded through a time-limited federal grant. Without legislative action, families will once again be left with no viable options during their most vulnerable moments.

H5527 creates a sustainable path forward by requiring Medicaid coverage for MRSS and certifying providers statewide. It ensures Rhode Island meets EPSDT obligations and fulfills the intent of the DCYF Consent Decree while addressing systemic gaps in our behavioral health crisis response.

For all these reasons, **we urge you to support H5527** and ensure that MRSS has ongoing and sustainable funding. Thank you for considering our testimony and we hope you will consider the bill favorably; we know doing so will make a tremendous difference in the lives of Rhode Island families that will benefit by passage of this bill.

Please don't hesitate to contact me, JDiNunzio@hhpartners, if you have questions or need more information about our support for MRSS. We look forward to working with the legislature to ensure that mobile response and stabilization services are a fundamental part of Rhode Island's mental health care system and is an essential step toward creating a more integrated, effective, and equitable system of care for children and families across Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James DiNunzio", with a stylized flourish at the end.

James DiNunzio
Chief Executive Officer, Horizon Healthcare Partners