



Office of the Child Advocate

State of Rhode Island

Katelyn Medeiros, Esq. - Child Advocate

childadvocate.ri.gov

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

May 20, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Abney and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of House Bill 5527 which would appropriate six million dollars (\$6,000,000) to establish a statewide standalone children's mobile response and stabilization services (MRSS) to address the behavioral health needs of children and youth from age two to age twenty-one. This act would also provide that the state allocate general revenue funds to provide services not funded by Medicaid. The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) would oversee implementation of the program and promulgate rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this chapter.

My name is Katelyn Medeiros, and I am the Child Advocate for the State of Rhode Island. I am the Director of the agency which serves as the oversight agency to DCYF. As the oversight agency, we monitor the case of each child and young adult open to the Department to protect their legal rights and to promote policies and practices which ensure that youth are safe, and that their physical, mental, medical, educational, emotional, and behavioral health needs are met. When concerns about a specific out-of-home placement are brought to the attention of the OCA, our staff determine the type of advocacy that may be needed and take appropriate steps to protect the child's safety and overall well-being.

MRSS is an evidence based, primary prevention intervention with a workforce specifically trained to respond and support children, young people, and their caregivers in times of crisis. MRSS provides rapid, stabilization services 24-hours per day, 365 days per year, and connects families to long-term resources. MRSS staff can complete immediate risk assessment for suicidal ideation, psychosis, or acute behavioral health disturbances due to family-related conflicts or traumatic events requiring immediate intervention. MRSS aids families in accessing timely intervention when it is needed most to quickly address behavioral health needs, prevent unnecessary hospitalizations, and provide warm connections to long-term services and supports. Our most vulnerable youth deserve access to swift, readily available crisis intervention when faced with behavioral health emergencies.

Mental and behavioral health supports are critical to overall well-being, particularly when preventative interventions can be accessed to avoid deeper system involvement. MRSS provides in-person de-escalation and stabilization support when children and families are in crisis. MRSS staff can respond to families in their home or at safe location in the community and families are provided up to six to eight weeks of follow-up support services and connections to additional resources.



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The OCA urges passage of House Bill 5527 to fund a statewide standalone mobile response and stabilization services to support the critical behavioral health needs of children and youth in Rhode Island. We thank you for your continued support of children and families involved with the child welfare system in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Medeiros, Esq.
Child Advocate