



Washington County Coalition for Children

To: Chair Rep. Marvin Abney of the House Finance Committee

Date: May 20, 2025

RE: **Support for H5527 - Children's Mobile Crisis Services & Stabilization Services Act**

I write on behalf of the Washington County Coalition for Children in strong **support of H5527 - Children's Mobile Crisis Services & Mobilization Services Act**. This act will end police & hospital Emergency Depts. (EDs) serving as the 'defacto' behavioral health crisis response system for children & youth (ages 2-21 years) in RI. Hospital EDs, with their fast pace and focus on critically ill patients, are not the places for children in emotional distress to obtain behavioral health care. The mere presence of police or fire/ambulance response can also be anxiety producing & traumatizing for children in crisis. Use of the police and hospital EDs. in this way is not only extremely costly, but largely ineffective in meeting the behavioral health needs of children & families during these painful moments as the vast majority of these children are discharged home from hospital EDs. with no treatment or services in place, just a directive to all their insurer. **Behavioral health crises require a behavioral health response**. And for children, a response by someone trained in child development & family treatment.

H5527 makes it possible for RI to provide the gold standard in behavioral health crisis care for children & youth - **Mobile Crisis and Stabilization Services (MRSS)**. In addition, this act puts in place an important element of the national 9-8-8 crisis response system that requires:



Someone to Call

(24/7 Hotline via call, text, chat)



Someone to Respond

(Mobile Crisis Services)



A Safe Place to Be

(Crisis Stabilization Services)

MRSS teams have specially trained child/adolescent behavioral health clinicians who can de-escalate crisis situations, conduct on-site assessments, provide crisis intervention counseling, and provide follow-up individual & family treatment and support for 4-6 weeks. Family Service of RI and Tides Family Services have been implementing MRSS in RI with fidelity to the evidence-based model and show great results. Although CCBHC contracts currently require that they provide MRSS, none currently have the capacity to do so. From a quality and cost control, as well as an equity perspective, it makes more sense for MRSS to function statewide, and for Family Service of RI and Tides Family Services, who have significant MRSS experience and expertise, to provide these needed services.

With a functioning, stable crisis system for children, we could not only end the heartache and anxiety for families, but the state's wasteful spending on the 911 police/fire calls and boarding of our children in hospital EDs. It's time that we provide evidence-based, crisis services for ALL children in RI that need them. We must begin to **think beyond time-limited federal grants & build the crisis system our children need now**. Use the leftover Emergency Response (911) funds collected from phone fees and put them to the use for which they were intended: crisis care. **Make MRSS available to all children in need, pass H5527.**

Sincerely,

Robert Hicks

Volunteer Lobbyist