



# East Providence School Department

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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,

On behalf of The East Providence School Department, I am pleased to submit this letter in support of H5527, which would establish a sustainable, statewide Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) program for children and youth experiencing behavioral health crises. As a district, we know firsthand the urgent need for immediate, community-based crisis support to help children and caregivers navigate behavioral health challenges—without unnecessary emergency room visits or law enforcement involvement.

Our schools across the district have been able to turn to Family Service of Rhode Island and their MRSS team in times of need, ensuring the safety and well-being of our children and youth. We hear from our staff and families that they need someone to help them in the moment—in their home, school, or community—not hours or days later.

MRSS provides exactly that:

- A trained behavioral health team responds immediately to help the child and family, preventing escalation.
- No need to call police or rush to the ER, avoiding unnecessary trauma for the child, family, and school staff.
- Services are available 24/7, ensuring that families aren't left alone in their most difficult moments.
- Follow-up support is provided for up to six weeks to stabilize the family and connect them to ongoing care.

This program works. Since October 2022, Tides Family Services and Family Service of Rhode Island MRSS teams have served over 1,300 children across Rhode Island, successfully diverting more than 90% from hospitalization—keeping kids safe at home and in their communities while saving the state millions in avoidable emergency care costs.

Without permanent funding and statewide coordination, this essential service is at risk. Families should not have to fight for access to care when they are already in crisis. We need to ensure that every Rhode Island child, no matter where they live or what insurance they have, can get immediate help when they need it.

We strongly urge you to support H5527 to protect and expand MRSS, giving Rhode Island families the right support at the right time—before a crisis turns into a tragedy.

Sincerely,

*Sandra J. Forand*

Superintendent

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The East Providence School Department, in partnership with families and the community, is committed to provide a comprehensive, inclusive program of academic excellence in a safe, nurturing environment preparing all students to become responsible, life-long learners able to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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