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April 18, 2025

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 Center for Healing, I urge your support for H5527, which would establish a sustainable, statewide Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) program for children and youth experiencing behavioral health crises. As advocates for Rhode Island families, 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.

When a child is in crisis, families are often left with nowhere to turn. Many parents are told to call 911, leading to traumatic experiences for their child, fear and distress for their family, and unnecessary strain on emergency responders. We hear time and time again from parents 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.

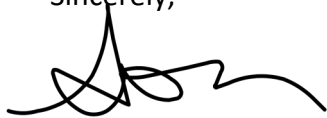
- Services are available 24/7, ensuring that families aren't left alone in their most difficult moments.
- Follow-up support is provided for up to six weeks to stabilize the family and connect them to ongoing care.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sarah Owens', with a stylized, flowing script.

Sarah Owens, LMHC
Executive Director