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May 20, 2025

The Honorable Marvin Abney  
Chairman, House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: House Bill No. H5527 Relating to Behavioral Healthcare,  
Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals – Children’s Mobile  
Response and Stabilization Services Act.**

Dear Chairman Abney:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association, I am writing to express our strong support for H5527, the *Children’s Mobile Response and Stabilization Services Act*.

This legislation is critical to ensuring that law enforcement officers across Rhode Island have access to the specialized support they need when responding to children in behavioral health crisis. Every day, police officers encounter situations where a child or adolescent is in acute emotional distress. These are not criminal incidents—they are medical and behavioral health emergencies. Officers are trained to keep people safe, but we are not clinicians. When children experience behavioral health crises, they need care from trained mental health professionals who understand how to intervene safely, compassionately, and effectively.

Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) fills that gap. It gives officers and dispatchers the ability to call for a real-time, in-person response from a child-trained behavioral health team, reducing the need for emergency room transports or juvenile detention. These teams meet families where they are—at home, in school, or on the street—and work to de-escalate and stabilize the situation in real time. This model has already proven highly effective in Rhode Island. From October 2022 to January 2025, MRSS diverted over 90% of youth from hospitalization and kept them in the community where they belong. It aligns with the principles of community policing by promoting early intervention, building trust with families, and avoiding unnecessary institutionalization.

H5527 will ensure that this vital service becomes permanent and accessible statewide. It establishes a sustainable funding mechanism through a combination of federal Medicaid, commercial insurance, and state general revenue, and requires the timely submission of a State Plan Amendment to secure federal reimbursement.

The Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association sees this legislation as a win for public safety, a win for public health, and—most importantly—a win for children and families. We commend Representative Casimiro for introducing this important bill, and we respectfully urge the House Finance Committee to support H5527.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this written testimony on behalf of the RIPCA and as always, I am available for any follow-up questions you or the committee may have, and we are willing to continue discussions with the bill's sponsors.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Wordell", written in a cursive style.

Sidney Wordell  
Executive Director  
Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association