

May 19, 2025

In support of House Bill 5527

Dear Chairman Abney, Vice Chair Slater, and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Trish Labonte, and I am the mother of Kiana Labonte. I am here today to share my experience as a parent and why the Children's Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) program is critical for families like mine.

For years, we tried everything to get Kiana the help she needed and deserved. We tried outpatient counseling, private school, even hospitalization, nothing seemed to make a real difference. No matter how hard we worked to find solutions, Kiana continued to struggle with overwhelming anxiety and depression. As a mother, it was devastating to see my child in pain and feel powerless to help her. We made many trips to the emergency room and left feeling more lost and unsure of what to do next.

Everything came to a breaking point one day at school. When the school called me and said Kiana was suicidal and they were going to call the rescue and have her taken out of school. I was terrified. I learned about the Mobile Response team from a co-worker that day. While I was on my way to school, I called the MRSS and by the time Kiana and I arrived home, the MRSS was at my house.

A team of caring professionals arrived—not in uniforms, not to take my daughter away, but to truly listen and support us. They spoke to Kiana with compassion and dignity, helping her feel safe in her own home. They gave me the tools to support her, checked in with us in the days that followed, and made sure she stayed connected to care. They continued to make weekly visits with Kiana at my house.

Because of MRSS, my daughter didn't have to be hospitalized again. She didn't have to miss school or be separated from her family. For the first time in a long time, we felt like we had a real support system. I shudder to think what might have happened without this resource.

There are countless parents in Rhode Island who, like me, want nothing more than to help their children but don't always know how. The MRSS program is a lifeline—one that ensures families get the right help at the right time, before a crisis escalates. I urge you to support House Bill 5527 so that no parent has to face their child's crisis alone and no child has to suffer in silence.

Thank you for your time and for prioritizing the well-being of Rhode Island's children and families.

Sincerely,

Trish Labonte