



June 3, 2025

House Finance Committee

Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: SUPPORT for H 6308 —An Act Relating to Human Services—Medical Assistance—Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment

Dear Chair Marvin Abney, First Vice Chair Slater, Second Vice Chair Marszalkowski, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

On behalf of The Kennedy Forum, a national organization dedicated to advancing quality mental health programming in schools and communities that benefits students, families, and educators, I write in strong support of House Bill 6308.

We are facing an urgent youth mental health crisis. Far too many families across Rhode Island and the nation are unable to access timely care, and too often, young people only receive support after a crisis has occurred. We know this can and must change—and that early intervention, especially in schools, is one of the most effective tools we have.

Schools are often the first place where mental health needs are identified, and where trusted adults can offer help. Unfortunately, existing Medicaid policy in Rhode Island limits reimbursement for school-based services to students with an IEP or IFSP—excluding thousands of students in need. House Bill 6308 corrects this.

This legislation would allow Rhode Island to update its Medicaid State Plan to enable reimbursement for behavioral health and physical health services provided to all Medicaid-enrolled students, regardless of disability status. Importantly, it directs that federal Medicaid dollars be reinvested into school-based health and behavioral health programs, helping to build a sustainable system of care for students.

Other states have already seen the impact of similar reforms. Louisiana's expansion of expanded school-based Medicaid billing led to a 35% increase in federal revenue while North Carolina school



districts participating in its expansion saw a 35% increase in Medicaid reimbursement—with no additional cost to the state.

House Bill 6308 provides Rhode Island with a clear pathway to leverage federal dollars to strengthen school-based services without requiring new state general fund investments. These funds can support the professionals already working in schools—nurses, social workers, psychologists, counselors—who are on the front lines of this crisis.

The Kennedy Forum strongly urges you to support H 6308. With this bill, Rhode Island can make a profound difference in the lives of its youth by removing financial barriers to care and building a more responsive, equitable system.

Thank you for your leadership and for your continued commitment to the mental health and well-being of Rhode Island's children.

Respectfully,

Lauren Finke
Senior Director of Policy
The Kennedy Forum