



3/25/2026

The Honorable Teresa Tanzi
Chair, House Finance Committee, Subcommittee on Human Services
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for Department of Human Services Budget - Governor's FY 2027 Budget – H7127

Chair Tanzi and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of the Governor's FY27 proposed budget for the Department of Human Services (DHS). FSRI supports the work of Director Merolla-Brito and the DHS in their work to ensure that all Rhode Islanders have the opportunity to thrive at home, work and in the community.

FSRI is a behavioral health and social service organization that has been serving Rhode Island children, families and communities for over a century, including programming to support healthy child development, to provide essential behavioral health services, and to coordinate housing support services that help children and families thrive. FSRI is a state Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) and a certified provider of children's mobile response and stabilization services (MRSS).

We want to recognize the excellent leadership and collaboration demonstrated by Director Merolla-Brito and the team at DHS. In particular, their willingness to partner closely with DCYF and with community providers on accessing and strategically deploying TANF to strengthen family preservation efforts in Rhode Island. We applaud DHS's commitment to maximizing every available federal resource to ensure families can remain safely together. We are looking forward to the launch of a new pilot program at DCYF through which FSRI staff will work directly with DCYF Child Protective Services (CPS) to jointly respond to families in crisis. FSRI clinicians and case managers will provide follow-up services, including clinical support, case management, housing navigation, and enrollment into DHS's Housing Stability Pilot, ensuring families have the resources they need to resolve housing instability and maintain long-term safety and stability.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of the DHS budget, and please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Margaret Holland McDuff', written over a light blue background.

Margaret Holland McDuff, CEO