



5/14/2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney  
Chairperson, House Finance Committee  
State of Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: Support for H7796 - An act relating to human services - Joint commission to study ways to maximize revenue for child welfare and children's behavioral health services.**

Chairman Abney and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of H7796, which would establish a 27-member joint commission to study ways to maximize revenue for child welfare and children's behavioral health services.

FSRI is a behavioral health and social service organization with the mission "to advance hope and opportunity in our communities." We have 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 crisis intervention programs that help children and families thrive. FSRI's is a state Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) and a provider of children's Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS). Additionally, we provide several services under contract with the RI Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), including residential, foster care, and community-based programming.

FSRI supports the establishment of the 27-member commission because it offers a coordinated effort that Rhode Island urgently needs at this moment of significant Medicaid and fiscal transformation. The bill recognizes that the state is undergoing an extensive Medicaid/fiscal transformation project with major implications for children, families, and service providers, making a formal body to evaluate funding strategies both timely and essential. By bringing together legislative leaders, agency partners, and provider experts, the commission is well positioned to ensure Rhode Island fully leverages federal funding streams, including Medicaid, Section 115, 1915(b) and 1915(c) waivers, TANF, Title IVB and IVE, MIECHV, and federal grants administered by the state, to strengthen the continuum of care for child welfare and children's behavioral health services.

Additionally, the commission's charge to examine how federal maximization strategies interact with state investments will help preserve access, quality, and provider stability during this period of transformation. Its structured reporting requirements create an opportunity for clear, data-informed recommendations that can help guide Rhode Island through the complexities of Medicaid redesign while ensuring children and families continue to receive the support they need.



Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of H7796, which will help ensure strong and sustainable funding for child welfare and children’s behavioral health services and help to safeguard the stability of services that countless children and families depend on. By maximizing every available federal and state resource, we can strengthen the continuum of care and protect the wellbeing of Rhode Island’s most vulnerable youth. By establishing the commission it will address this immediate need and longer term, the commission will drive the policy and practice of maximizing all available funds for safety and well-being of our children. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or follow-up.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Margaret Holland McDuff'.

Margaret Holland McDuff  
CEO