

To whom it may concern,

Mental health crisis response must be rooted in the communities where children and families live. Localized, community-based care allows providers to respond with an understanding of the family systems, school partnerships, neighborhood dynamics, and local resources that shape a child's daily life. That knowledge is essential to delivering care that is timely, relevant, and sustainable. Since October 2025 to present, 45% of Newport Mental Health's Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) community-based responses were due to suicidal, homicidal, or self-injurious behaviors, and we have diverted 76% of our MRSS cases from unnecessary hospitalization. Newport Mental Health's MRSS team's clinicians answer calls within 10 seconds and respond to any child/family crisis within all of Newport County in less than 30 minutes.

The current amendments to the proposed Senate Bill 3066 SubA regarding the amount of MRSS licensed providers and catchment area census size will break the safety net that has been created in Newport County and across the state by all Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics and MRSS providers. When services are delivered by providers who are embedded in the community, families are more likely to engage because care is built on existing trust and relationships. Local agencies play a critical role in ensuring access to care within the communities they serve. At Newport Mental Health (NMH), that connection is reflected in the fact that our children's clinicians are embedded in thirteen local schools: St. Philomena's, Forest Avenue Elementary, Aquidneck Elementary, Pocasset Elementary, Ranger Elementary, Gaudet Elementary and Middle School, Portsmouth Middle School, Tiverton Middle School, Thompson Middle School, Middletown High School, Tiverton High School, and Rogers High School. With 43% of our MRSS referrals coming directly through our school system. This level of local presence allows us to identify needs early, support students in the environments where they spend their time and collaborate directly with school staff who know the children and families they serve. In addition to our school-based presence, we maintain strong care coordination with local pediatricians and are well connected to provider-based care coordination for children and adolescents throughout the community. These established partnerships allow us to respond quickly and coordinate care in ways that are practical and effective for local families, on average NMH MRSS children and families are stabilized and/or connected with an NHM CCBHC care team in 17.5 days, quicker than the MRSS 30-day stabilization phase. A system that relies on one or two large organizations to deliver care across the entire state risks losing that local knowledge and connection, which can reduce responsiveness, weaken continuity, and make it harder for families to access support that feels relevant and reachable. In Newport County, statewide centralization will create service gaps by increasing travel distances, reducing familiarity with local referral networks, and limiting

the ability to respond quickly to children and families across island and coastal communities. Newport County is rural, consisting of 1/6 of Rhode Island's rural towns, relying on five bridges to connect to mainland Rhode Island. Bridge conditions and weather can quickly disrupt access. This is one reason that Newport County needs a strong local network at the center of its community response. Families in crisis benefit from providers who can navigate the specific school systems, pediatric practices, community partners, and geographic realities of this region without delay. Preserving Newport Mental Health as a regional MRSS provider will help ensure that children and families in Newport County continue to receive timely, coordinated care from professionals who know their community and can connect them to the right supports without unnecessary delay. This regional model is essential to maintaining equitable, community-based access to mental health care across Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

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