



May 12, 2026

Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Kimberly Rawson, and I serve as the Assistant Principal for North Smithfield High School. I am writing in strong support of H8180 and continued investment in Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) for children and families across Rhode Island.

Schools are increasingly serving students with significant behavioral health, trauma, and emotional needs. On any given day, school staff are responding to students experiencing anxiety, panic attacks, emotional dysregulation, suicidal ideation, family crises, and trauma-related behaviors that impact both learning and overall well-being.

While schools work hard to support students, we are not behavioral health crisis systems, and many families struggle to access timely supports when a child is in crisis. MRSS has become an essential resource because it provides rapid, community-based intervention and stabilization for children and families when they need it most.

At North Smithfield High School, we experienced firsthand the critical importance of these services in the aftermath of the tragic shooting at Lynch Arena on February 16th. In the days that followed, our students, staff, and families were navigating fear, grief, uncertainty, and trauma. The MRSS team responded with compassion, professionalism, and immediacy, helping support members of our school community during an incredibly difficult time. Their presence and partnership provided meaningful emotional support and stabilization when our community needed it most. Even after the immediate crisis passed, MRSS continued to be an important resource for our school community as students, families, and staff continued navigating the lasting effects of trauma and healing in the weeks and months that followed. Their ongoing support reinforced how essential accessible behavioral health response services are for schools and families.

From a school perspective, MRSS helps:

- De-escalate crises before they worsen
- Reduce unnecessary emergency department visits and police involvement
- Support students in remaining safely in school and connected to their communities
- Assist families in navigating behavioral health systems and services
- Improve communication and coordination between schools, providers, and caregivers
- Reduce disruptions that impact classroom learning and school climate

Most importantly, MRSS recognizes that behavioral health crises do not happen in isolation. When children are struggling emotionally, it impacts attendance, academic performance, peer relationships, and overall school functioning.

We have seen firsthand how timely intervention and stabilization can help students return to the classroom, maintain relationships, and avoid more restrictive or traumatic interventions. As Rhode Island continues addressing the youth behavioral health crisis, community-based services like MRSS are critical to supporting both children and the systems that serve them.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support H8180 and continue strengthening Rhode Island's continuum of care for children and families. Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to Rhode Island's youth.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Rawson