

Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Lindsey Tavares, and I serve as a school administrator in Rhode Island. I am writing in strong support of H8180 and of the continued sustainability of Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) for children and families across our state.

In schools, we regularly work with students experiencing significant behavioral health challenges and moments of crisis. Too often, families and educators are left with limited options once a situation escalates. Historically, that has meant relying on emergency departments or law enforcement responses that may not be best suited to address the underlying needs of children experiencing emotional or behavioral distress.

MRSS has provided an essential alternative.

I have personally utilized MRSS to support students and families during moments of crisis in the school setting. The ability to access trained behavioral health professionals who can respond directly, help de-escalate situations, stabilize students and families, and connect them with ongoing supports has been invaluable. These interventions not only support student well-being, but also help schools maintain safe and supportive learning environments while reducing unnecessary hospitalizations and law enforcement involvement.

Services like MRSS are critical because behavioral health crises do not occur only in clinical settings or during business hours. Children and families need access to immediate, community-based support in homes, schools, and communities before situations become more severe. MRSS helps keep students connected to their schools, families, and communities while providing compassionate and appropriate intervention when it is needed most.

As educators and school leaders continue to face growing student behavioral health needs, sustaining and strengthening programs like MRSS is essential.

I urge you to support H8180 and continue investing in community-based behavioral health services for children and families across Rhode Island.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lindsey Tavares