



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 H8180

Chairman Abney and members of the committee:

I am writing in strong support of H8180. This bill is critical to establish a statewide Mobile Response and Stabilization (MRSS) program in line with the requirements from the Children's Behavioral Health Consent Decree and with fidelity to the evidence-based model.

As a provider of Children's Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) and a key partner in its implementation, Family Service of Rhode Island (FSRI) is in strong support of H8180 which will establish Children's MRSS as a permanent, statewide program dedicated to providing 24/7 crisis response and stabilization services for children and youth ages 21 and younger. The legislation establishes a smart, braided financing strategy for MRSS including: Medicaid reimbursement, commercial insurance, General Revenue to cover uninsured or underinsured youth not covered by Medicaid or traditional commercial insurance, and federal matching funds. Together, these sources will form an MRSS annual budget plan that will require under \$1 million of general revenue funding for FY2027 to fully implement a sustainable, statewide system.

MRSS is one of the most effective and fiscally responsible interventions in our behavioral health system. MRSS ensures that families across Rhode Island have access to immediate, developmentally appropriate behavioral health intervention when they need it most. Too often, families in crisis have no choice but to turn to emergency departments or law enforcement - systems that are not designed to provide the long-term care and stability children need. MRSS fills this gap by sending trained professionals directly to the child's home, school, or community setting to de-escalate the crisis and connect families with ongoing support. The impact of MRSS is undeniable. Since October 2022, FSRI and Tides have served over hundreds of children and youth, and diverted over 90% of them from hospitalization. Because it is an evidence-based model, fidelity to the standards is necessary for success, and demonstrated expertise in child and adolescent behavioral health and family systems is a key component. The legislation recognizes this.



Ultimately, strengthening and sustaining MRSS is a sound and necessary investment- one that prevents crises, keeps families stable, and reduces far more costly downstream interventions. Additionally, MRSS must be treated with parity as an urgent service, like physical health, and be exempt from deductibles that families simply cannot afford.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of this critical bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Margaret Holland McDuff', written in a cursive style.

Margaret Holland McDuff
CEO