

Testimony in Support of H8180 – Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS)

My name is Patricia Martinez, and I serve as the Chief of Equity & Empowerment Officer for the Central Falls School District. 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.

It is no secret that schools across the state are serving increasing numbers of students with significant behavioral health, trauma-related, 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 tirelessly to support students, school personnel and families often struggle to access timely and appropriate supports when a child is in crisis. MRSS has become an essential resource by providing rapid-response, community-based intervention and stabilization services for children and families when they need them most.

From a school perspective, MRSS helps to:

- 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 negatively impact classroom learning and school climate

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

We have seen firsthand how timely intervention and stabilization services 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. MRSS is not simply another program — it is a cost-effective investment in prevention, intervention, and long-term student success and children well-being.

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,



Patricia Martinez
Chief of Equity & Empowerment Officer
Central Falls School District