



Washington County Coalition for Children

To: Chairman Rep. Marvin Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee

Date: May 14, 2026

RE: **Support for H8180 - Children's Mobile Response & Stabilization Services (MRSS)**

I write on behalf of the Washington County Coalition for Children in strong support of **H8180 - continued funding for Children's Mobile Response & Stabilization Services (MRSS)**. Like EMS, MRSS provide critical emergency services whenever someone calls. They respond to where ever the people are, experiencing crises and stabilize the patient, providing timely compassionate care.

Before RI had MRSS, police & hospital Emergency Depts. (EDs) served as the 'defacto' behavioral health crisis response system for children & youth (ages 2-21 years) in RI. Hospital EDs., with their fast pace and focus on critically ill patients, are not the places for children in emotional distress to obtain behavioral health care. Use of the police and hospital EDs. in this way is not only extremely costly, but largely ineffective in meeting the behavioral health needs of children & families during these painful moments as the vast majority of these children are discharged home from hospital EDs. with no treatment or services in place, just a directive to call their insurer. **Behavioral health crises require a behavioral health response.** And for children, a response by someone trained in child development & family treatment, which MRSS provides.

MRSS is the gold standard in behavioral health crisis care for children & youth. MRSS teams have specially trained child/adolescent behavioral health clinicians who de-escalate crisis situations, conduct on-site assessments, provide crisis intervention counseling, and provide follow-up individual & family treatment and support for 4-6 weeks. Family Service of RI and Tides Family Services have been implementing MRSS in RI with fidelity to the evidence-based model and show great results.

From a quality and cost control, as well as an equity perspective, allocating funds to continue MRSS across RI should be a no brainer. With a functioning, stable crisis system for children, we will not only end the heartache and anxiety for families, but the state's wasteful spending on the 911 police/fire calls and boarding of our children in hospital EDs.

It's time that we provide evidence-based, crisis services for ALL children in RI that need them. We must begin to **think beyond time-limited federal grants & build the crisis system our children need now. RI must invest in services that help children and families before they escalate to tragedies.** Use the leftover Emergency Response (911) funds collected from phone fees and put them to the use for which they were intended: crisis care.

Make MRSS available to all children in need, pass H8180.

Sincerely,

Robert Hicks

Volunteer Lobbyist