

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

Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Stephen Carter, and I serve as the Director of Student Services in Warwick. 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.

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.