

Association of RI Administrators of Special Education: In support of H 8180

Sent via email to housefinance@rilegislature.gov

May 13, 2026

Representative Marvin Abney, Chairman
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
73 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Abney,

I write as legal counsel for the Association of Rhode Island Administrators of Special Education (“ARIASE”) to support H8180 and the continued investment in Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (“MRSS”) the bill would secure for children and families across Rhode Island. ARIASE is the lone statewide association of special education administrators in Rhode Island, and its members are passionately committed to serving students with disabilities and working collaboratively with their families to enhance their educational opportunities and outcomes.

ARIASE members work with students with disabilities every day, and in recent years the number of students with significant behavioral health, trauma, and emotional needs has increased dramatically. While we certainly recognize that our peers in regular education are also serving more students who experience anxiety, panic attacks, emotional dysregulation, suicidal ideation, family crises, and trauma-related behaviors, the spike has been especially acute and intense in special education. Simply put, we are receiving more referrals for special education and related services than ever, and the complexity and extent of the mental health needs reflected in the deluge of referrals is unprecedented.

ARIASE members work hard to support all of our students, but special education departments are not behavioral health crisis systems, and many families struggle to access timely supports when they have a child in crisis. And we know 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.

MRSS has become an essential resource for special educators, because it provides rapid, community-based intervention and stabilization for children and families when they need it most. MRSS helps to de-escalate crises before they worsen and reduce unnecessary emergency department visits and police involvement. MRSS helps to reduce disruptions to classroom learning and school climate, and supports students in remaining safely in school and connected to their communities. ARIASE members can attest to the importance of timely intervention and stabilization in helping students return to the classroom, maintain relationships, and avoid more restrictive or traumatic interventions.

ARIASE enthusiastically supports H 8180 and thanks Representative Casimiro and her co-sponsors for recognizing the value of the support that MRSS provides to both children and the systems that serve them and for taking action to confront the very real youth behavioral health crisis in our state. Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Timothy J. Groves, Esq.