

## **ELIZABETH BURKE BRYANT, JD**

**Testimony in support of H-8268 (Individual Capacity)**

**House Finance Committee**

**May 14, 2026**

Good evening, Chairwoman Murray and members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. **My name is Elizabeth Burke Bryant, and I am a Professor of the Practice of Health Services, Policy and Practice at Brown University School of Public Health where I am based at the Hassenfeld Child Health Innovation Institute.** I am providing this testimony in my individual capacity.

**I am testifying in strong support of H-8268, the Healthcare Services Funding Plan Act,** sponsored by Representative Shallcross Smith and co-sponsored by Representatives Casimiro, Giraldo, Fellela, Tanzi, Fogarty, Bennet, Ajello, Boylan, and Carson.

**Rhode Island's two Psychiatric Resource Network programs – MomsPRN and Pedi-PRN have a successful track record of addressing the difficulty many parents have in getting timely behavioral health evaluations and treatment for their children, and the lack of direct access to mental health services in many OBGYN practices.**

These programs are an essential support for pediatric and OBGYN primary care practices that don't have on-site psych capacity but often have patients who present with behavioral health issues. Thanks to the PRN programs, primary care providers can obtain same-day expert tele-consultations with child and perinatal psychiatrists so they can provide same-day mental health advice and referrals to their patients.

**This Act would include both MOMS-PRN and Pedi-PRN teleconsultation lines in the healthcare services funding contributions payable by health insurers.** The bill also provides that the additional \$30 million assessment to support primary care and other critical healthcare programs as described in Section 23-1-46.1 shall include Moms-PRN and Pedi-PRN.

**The bill would put the PRN programs in law so that they will continue to operate as an essential part of the RI behavioral health system of care.** The law provides that the RI Department of Health shall operate the statewide Psychiatry Resource Network (PRN) programs – Moms-PRN and Pedi-PRN, which expand Rhode Island's behavioral Health capacity by providing tailored, same day psychiatric consultation to OBGYN and pediatric primary care providers so their patients can receive timely information and referrals related to their mental and behavioral health issues.

**Pedi-PRN (Pediatric Psychiatry Resource Network), operated by Bradley Hospital,** offers pediatric primary care providers same-day mental health phone consultations with specialists who provide patient-centered information, referrals and support for children's behavioral health

needs. Pedi-PRN has fielded 3,173 calls from 465 providers at 186 practices that have impacted 3,001 children to date.

**MomsPRN (Maternal Psychiatry Resource Network), operated by Women & Infants in collaboration with the RI Department of Health,** connects OBGYN providers to real-time phone consultations with expert clinicians who provide treatment guidance and referrals. Since the program started in June 2024, MOMS-PRN has received 3,593 calls from 966 providers at 312 practices across the state that have impacted 3,048 pregnant and postpartum individuals.

**These programs serve children, adolescents, and new mothers who live in all of your districts.**

**Pediatric primary care providers have testified that they absolutely depend on Pedi-PRN and new moms who have benefited from MomsPRN have called it a lifeline.**

**I respectfully urge you to pass H-8268 because RI's PRN programs are cost effective and have proven track records. RI's PRN programs help to prevent mental health conditions from escalating – causing harm to families and sometimes requiring high-cost hospitalization.**

**I also urge you to appropriate \$630,000 so that Pedi-PRN will be able to operate from October 1, 2026 until June 30, 2027. Pedi-PRN has funding for the first three months of the new state fiscal year, but as of October 1, 2026, Pedi-PRN will not have the funds to continue to operate and will close.** MomsPRN will require \$750,000 for SFY 2027, and this funding is included in the Governor's proposed FY27 budget. MomsPRN will have sufficient funds to operate if the \$750,000 stays in the FY 27 budget that will be passed by the RI General Assembly.

**RI's MOMS and Pedi-PRN programs are a bright light in the behavioral health system of care and should continue for the long-term through passage of this bill.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your leadership on issues affecting Rhode Island's children and families.