



May 14, 2026

The Honorable Representative Marvin L. Abney  
Chair of the House Committee on Finance  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for House Bill 8268 - MomsPRN and PediPRN

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Mental Health Association's support for House Bill 8268, which would provide sustainable funding for two psychiatric phone consultation services benefiting children and pregnant and postpartum mothers.

Parents and families are consistently referred to their primary care physician for help when they suspect a behavioral health concern in themselves or their child. Physicians are relied on as trusted sources of information concerning behavioral health, and they provide important interventions such as education, screening, referral, and sometimes treatment. They cannot face Rhode Island's growing behavioral health needs alone, however. They require continuing education and timely consultation in order to remain effective practitioners. The MomsPRN and PediPRN phone lines are crucial investments into our healthcare system, and allow for medical professionals and other frontline workers to practice safe and informed services.

Behavioral health concerns affect people of all ages; about 50% of lifetime mental illness begins by age 14.<sup>1</sup> Research shows, however, that the average age of treatment is about 11 years after the onset of symptoms.<sup>2</sup> We can close that gap by increasing screenings, lowering wait times, and improving access to treatment for young people through teleconsultation for care providers. In addition, 19% of mothers experience postpartum depression.<sup>3</sup> These parents often turn to their healthcare team for guidance, and that team will be better able to offer support with access to consultation and training.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15939837/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1361014/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11579791/>

Supporting MomsPRN and PediPRN for screening, assessment, diagnosis and treatment of mental illness in mothers and young children is a worthy investment for Rhode Island. It will pay dividends into the future as we reduce and prevent physical and mental illnesses, crises, hospitalization, poor academic performance, reliance on public benefits, and violence. A healthy citizenry costs less than a sick one.

For these reasons, MHARI supports this legislation. Thank you for your consideration of our views. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

*Laura Shank*

Laura Shank, LCSW  
Youth Behavioral Health Liaison  
[laura.shank@mhari.org](mailto:laura.shank@mhari.org)  
Cell: 401.426.4544