



March 25, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
State of Rhode Island House of Representatives  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for House Bill H8247

Dear Chairperson McEntee and Members of the Senate Committee,

I am writing to express Family Service of Rhode Island's strong support for House Bill 8247, which proposes changing the name of Drug Court to Recovery Court. As Chief of Behavioral Health at Family Service of Rhode Island (FSRI), I believe this change represents an important and meaningful step toward aligning our systems with recovery-oriented values and person-centered language.

Family Service of Rhode Island is proud to serve as a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC), providing a comprehensive continuum of behavioral health and recovery services to children, adults, and families across Rhode Island. Our work is grounded in recovery principles that emphasize hope, resilience, and the belief that individuals can and do recover from substance use and mental health challenges. Language plays a powerful role in shaping how individuals view themselves and how systems support them. Moving from "Drug Court" to "Recovery Court" reflects a strengths-based, recovery-focused approach that reinforces dignity and promotes engagement in services.

As a CCBHC, FSRI is committed to delivering integrated behavioral health and recovery services, including substance use treatment, peer recovery supports, crisis intervention, and ongoing care coordination. We work closely with individuals involved in the justice system and see firsthand how recovery-focused language can reduce stigma, encourage participation in treatment, and foster long-term positive outcomes. The proposed name change aligns with best practices in behavioral health and supports Rhode Island's continued progress toward a recovery-oriented system of care.

Adopting recovery-friendly language across our systems is not simply symbolic, it helps create an environment where individuals feel respected, supported, and empowered in their recovery journeys. House Bill 8247 reflects Rhode Island's commitment to modernizing our approach and ensuring that our policies and practices reflect the values we strive to uphold.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to strengthening Rhode Island's behavioral health and recovery systems. Family Service of Rhode Island strongly urges passage of House Bill 8247.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sarah Kelly-Palmer'.

Sarah Kelly-Palmer  
Chief of Behavioral Health  
Family Service of Rhode Island