



Office of the Child Advocate

State of Rhode Island

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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Thank you, Chair Donovan and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of House Bill 7949 which would authorize the Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) to license Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS).

My name is Katelyn Medeiros, and I am the Child Advocate for the State of Rhode Island. I am the Director of the agency which serves as the oversight agency to DCYF. As the oversight agency, we monitor the case of each child and young adult open to the Department to protect their legal rights and to promote policies and practices which ensure that youth are safe, and that their physical, mental, medical, educational, emotional, and behavioral health needs are met.

Presently, Rhode Island General Laws (R.I.G.L.) § [42-72-5](#) and § [42-72-5.2](#) clearly name DCYF as the authority on children's behavioral health in Rhode Island, with the exception of adolescent substance use services which is the authority of BHDDH according to R.I.G.L § [21-28.11-27.2](#). Therefore, the OCA supports authorizing DCYF to license and monitor the operation of MRSS for children and youth up to age 21.

Should DCYF become statutorily responsible for the licensing of MRSS in Rhode Island, it will create a new type of service overseen by the Licensing Unit. The OCA encourages DCYF to seek training and guidance support from experts in this type of licensing and oversight of MRSS services in anticipation of the passage of this bill.

The OCA thanks Chairwoman Serpa for her sponsorship of this bill and we thank this Committee for your continued support of children and families impacted by children's behavioral health in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Medeiros, Esq.
Child Advocate