



**Testimony Re: House Bill 7949**  
**House Health and Human Services Committee**  
**March 12, 2026**  
**Michaela Carroll, MPH, Policy Associate**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for House Bill 7949. This bill would authorize the Department of Children, Youth and Families to license mobile response and stabilization services (MRSS). We would like to thank Representative Serpa for introducing this bill.

Mobile response and stabilization services (MRSS) are a lifeline for children and families experiencing acute mental health distress. They provide rapid response, urgent assessment, and early intervention for children and youth experiencing severe behavioral health challenges, such as aggression, self-injury, trauma, acute depression and anxiety, suicidal or homicidal thoughts, and extreme parent-child conflict.

The MRSS workforce is specifically trained to respond to the unique needs of children and youth and their caregivers. These teams provide an immediate risk assessment with the goal of diverting children and youth from emergency departments and youth justice system involvement and preventing unnecessary and costly hospitalizations and out-of-home placements. Over 90% of children referred to MRSS are deferred from emergency departments and stabilized.

The Department of Children, Youth and Families is statutorily responsible for children's behavioral health. **Mobile response and stabilization services that support Rhode Island's children and youth should be overseen by the organizations and agencies that are best equipped to meet the specific needs of children and youth.** The mental and behavioral health services and supports provided by MRSS for Rhode Island children and youth should thus be licensed and managed by DCYF.

Thank you for the leadership that the General Assembly has shown on funding and supporting MRSS, and we urge you to pass H-7949 to ensure that DCYF has the authority to license these services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.