

Representative Susan R. Donovan, Chairwoman  
House Health and Human Services Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

March 10, 2026

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Katie Anderson with Community Care Alliance. My agency staffs and operates BH Link. I'm writing to express our support of House Bill 8134, which would allow reimbursement for EMS transport to our facility. BH Link is a 24/7 walk-in crisis center for anyone experiencing mental health and substance use emergencies, regardless of insurance. We are a less costly, less restrictive hospital alternative in that we provide comprehensive, on-demand assessment, monitoring, support, and seamless transition to ongoing treatment. We provide these services in a tranquil, trauma-informed, person-centered setting with minimal wait times – generally between 10 and 45 minutes – and highly trained and specialized staff. Those who come to BH Link can expect a range of services that may include psychiatric assessment and medication; detoxification from substances; risk assessment and safety planning; basic needs support; and admission to levels of care including detox, crisis stabilization, and residential. Clients can generally remain at our facility for up to 23 hours, and throughout this period, our staff will work tirelessly to resolve the presenting and underlying needs as comprehensively as possible.

All told, we improve client outcomes; alleviate burdens on overcrowded hospitals; and support the behavioral healthcare system at large by making referrals to providers and treatment facilities statewide. Simply put, barring immediate life-threatening emergency, rarely is there a need for those with mental health or substance use concerns to seek treatment in an Emergency Department first. We take all comers, assume immediate responsibility for their care, and ensure they receive support and stabilization in the right setting. And for those whose issues are chronic, complex, or recurring, we invite them back as often is necessary to work in continued partnership toward their goals – and we follow up with them after they leave.

If EMS can transport directly to our facility and be reimbursed for their time, we will be empowering our trusted first responders to make decisions collaboratively and adaptively with the people they serve. Our first responders are experts at what they do. Just as they know to transport someone with medical trauma to a level 1 trauma center, they know to transport someone with suicidal thoughts or alcohol use disorder to BH Link. Supporting this bill sends a message to Rhode Islanders that mental health matters and that they have choice in where they receive care, and it sends a message to our first responders that their time and expertise matters.

Sincerely,  
Katie Anderson  
Vice President of Acute Services  
Community Care Alliance