



Michael Sroczynski
President

March 12, 2026

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan
Chair, House Committee on Health and Human Services
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: Support H.8134

Dear Chairperson Donovan,

On behalf of the Hospital Association of Rhode Island (HARI) and our member hospitals, I write in **strong support of H.8134**, legislation that strengthens Rhode Island's **behavioral health crisis response system** and improves how the state responds to mental health and substance use emergencies.

Hospitals in Rhode Island remain on the front lines of the behavioral health crisis. H.8134 takes an important step toward ensuring that patients experiencing behavioral health emergencies receive the **right care, in the right place, at the right time**, while strengthening coordination between EMS providers, behavioral health professionals, and hospitals.

Integrating Specialized Care into the Community. By allowing licensed mental health and substance use disorder providers to accompany EMS responders, this legislation enables immediate clinical evaluation and intervention in the field. This co-responder model has proven effective in de-escalating crises, stabilizing patients, and providing specialized care before a patient ever reaches a hospital.

Reducing Pressure on Emergency Departments. Today, EMS protocols often default to transporting behavioral health patients to hospital emergency departments, even when another setting may be more appropriate. By authorizing transport to Emergency Room Diversion Facilities and community-based behavioral health providers, H.8134 creates additional pathways for care and helps alleviate pressure on hospital emergency departments.

Ensuring Sustainable Care Models. The bill's requirement that insurers reimburse community-based evaluations and alternative transport options at rates comparable to traditional emergency care is essential to sustaining and expanding these services across the state.

For these reasons, HARI respectfully urges the Committee to recommend passage of H.8134.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa P. Tomasso", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lisa P. Tomasso
Senior Vice President