



March 30, 2026

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan  
Chairwoman  
Health and Human Services Committee  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: H7994 — SUPPORT**

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and distinguished members of the Committee,

On behalf of the **Parent Support Network of Rhode Island**, I am writing in support of **H7994**.

Parent Support Network of Rhode Island is a state-contracted, statewide family engagement organization for children's behavioral health, and we represent birth, foster, and adoptive parents/family caregivers of children, youth, and young adults who have serious emotional, behavioral, and mental health challenges and co-occurring disabilities. The families we serve are high-risk and involved with child welfare and the justice system. We specialize in the delivery of intergenerational services to parents struggling with addiction and/or mental illness who have children who are experiencing complex trauma. We understand firsthand the need to be able to access trauma-informed children's behavioral health services and receive a comprehensive array of community-based services and support to prevent and reduce acute hospitalization and reliance on restrictive residential services. We have learned that there is a need for children's behavioral health to be carved out from adult behavioral health to ensure children and their families receive the specialized services they need. H7994 ensures this.

I have been the parent who had to access children's behavioral health services for my own children in their early years, adolescence, and into adulthood. As a grandparent, I assisted my daughter in accessing the treatment and services for my grandson, who is diagnosed with high-functioning autism, Asperger's syndrome, anxiety, and learning disabilities, and he is now 19 years old. My grandson became a father six months ago, and I am now a great-grandparent to a six-month-old infant who is already experiencing trauma due to his mother's postpartum depression. After her mother's last psychiatric hospitalization, she abandoned her son for his father to raise at this time. We are all working closely together as a family to support them all and ensure appropriate treatment and services are accessed as needed.

Supporting H7994 will provide the necessary authority and infrastructure needed for the RI Department of Children, Youth and Families and its partners to continue the momentum of the Federal consent decree in strengthening the RI Children's behavioral Health system of care. The consent decree has started to implement intensive care coordination for children and youth who are experiencing acute hospitalization to reduce lengthy hospital stays and prevent future hospitalization and higher levels of out-of-home care, such as residential treatment.

Parents and Family members representing this population are providing ongoing input and recommendations, and parents feel strongly that if progress is lost with this new service delivery, access will become even more difficult. There is a need to expand intensive care coordinators within DCYF and with community based providers, who are trained in evidence-based models like wraparound and working across the multiple service delivery systems with the parents/caregivers to ensure behavioral health services are coordinated with social services, specialized childcare, special education and other education-related services, foster and kinship care, and other intergenerational needs of the child and family. Parents and youth are also experiencing involvement with the justice system and ongoing legal issues.

PSN and the families we serve have been extremely concerned by the lack of transparency and there has been absolutely no attempt to reach out to our family engagement organization and the Children's Behavioral Health Family Engagement Workgroup to ask our recommendations as they attempt to further consolidated with adult behavioral health and move children's behavioral health authority under the RI Behavioral Healthcare Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals.

H7994 speaks to building a children's behavioral health system of care that is family-driven and engages family and youth representing the population as leaders in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of the system of care. We have a motto- nothing about us without us- DCYF has recognized this and worked closely with us while other state partners are leaving families and youth voice and partnership behind. It is important that the leadership of DCYF continue to be at the helm of working with legal consent decree monitors and that progress is not disrupted.

We respectfully urge you to support **H7994** to reinforce DCYF's leadership role and carefully reconsider any budget language that would shift authority away from DCYF during this critical implementation period. Parent Support Network and the families we represent remain committed to working in partnership. Thank you for your consideration and your continued commitment to Rhode Island's children and families.

Sincerely,



**Lisa Conlan**  
**Executive Director**  
**Parent Support Network of Rhode Island**