



## Washington County Coalition for Children

To: Senator Louis DiPalma, Chair, Senate Finance Committee & Members

Date: April 14, 2026

RE: **RI Dept. of Health Budget Funding Needed for Both PediPRN & MomsPRN (S2562)**

The RI Dept. of Health Budget neglects to include funding for the continuation of state's psychiatric consultation service for children - Pedi PRN. **This oversight needs to be corrected.** Washington County Coalition for Children **opposes a budget that does not include funding** to sustain the state's two psychiatric consultation lifelines for pediatric and obstetric providers - PediPRN & MomsPRN - both services are essential in rural and mental health shortage areas of the state.

Our Coalition brings together community-based providers, schools, healthcare organizations, & family-serving agencies across Washington County. Recognized as a mental health shortage area, families in Washington County feel the devastating toll of unmet mental health needs. Every day, we see firsthand the increasing behavioral health needs of children & youth—and the gaps families face when a crisis occurs. New mothers experiencing postpartum depression also often don't know where to turn for help. PediPRN and MomsPRN are effective psychiatric consultation services that fill these gaps. With federal grant funding ending, the state needs to permanently fund **both** of these essential services. The proposed budget only includes MomsPRN.

PediPRN is a lifeline for overburdened pediatric primary care providers on the frontlines of our state's youth behavioral health crisis. This program has been instrumental in reducing avoidable emergency department visits and more importantly, ensuring timely access to psychiatric expertise. Without PediPRN, families will be once again be left waiting for help that never comes, and pediatric primary care providers will be forced to navigate complex mental health challenges without the tools or support they need. Washington County Pediatric providers rely on PediPRN to help children in need, especially in times of crisis. Similarly, obstetric providers rely on Moms PRN to support new mothers experiencing mental health challenges. Research confirms that untreated mental health conditions interrupt healthy child development and can seriously impact children's lifelong health trajectories. The sooner children get help, the better their outcomes. Our state needs these two vital mental health supports for health providers in our state to facilitate timely access to quality mental health care for their patients. **All but 1 state in the United States have similar PediPRN child psychiatric consultation services in place.** With 1 in 3 (30%) RI children with a significant mental health condition, we cannot afford to move backwards?

The Washington County Coalition for Children **strongly urges you to insist on funding for PediPRN in the RI Dept. of Health Budget and reject it as is (consistent with S2562).** PediPRN is a critical part of the state's behavioral health crisis system, and sustains vital services our front-line health providers rely upon. An investment in PediPRN is an investment in child well-being, family stability, and the future of our state.

Sincerely,

Robert Hicks, Volunteer Lobbyist

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