

March 30, 2026

Re: Testimony in Support of S2562

Dear Chairperson Murray and Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Dr. John Straus. I am a pediatrician and the founding director of the Massachusetts Child Psychiatry Access Program (MCPAP) and MCPAP for Moms. I am testifying in strong support of H8268. This legislation will sustain RI PediPRN when Federal funds stop at the end of September. I have consulted on the development of PediPRN and MomsPRN which are closely modelled off the work we have done in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts legislature has not only funded MCPAP for 21 years and MCPAP for Moms for 11 years but has put into statute insurer funding beginning in 2016 similar to that required by S2562. I also sit on the PediPRN advisory committee.

In Massachusetts, MCPAP and MCPAP for Moms have become key components of the pediatric and perinatal health care system, similar to what you are seeing in Rhode Island. Each year, MCPAP helps over 4,000 youth and MCPAP for Moms helps 3,000 moms. In an average year, over 80% of practices and 60% of pediatricians use MCPAP at least once demonstrating the essential nature of this service.

With the increasing incidence of childhood mental health and substance use challenges, this is not the time to lose the funding for PediPRN or MomsPRN. The shortage of child and perinatal psychiatrists make this funding even more critical. With these programs, families are able to access behavioral health services in their primary care setting close to home with clinicians who are comfortable delivering behavioral health services because of readily available expert psychiatric consultation.

I am also president of the National Network of Child Psychiatry Access Programs (NNCPAP). NNCPAP provides technical assistance to all 50 states that now have a child psychiatry access program (CPAP). You should know that the Rhode Island CPAP, PediPRN, is nationally one of the best and offers significant help to other programs around the country. Without funding, PediPRN is at risk of ending which would be truly tragic for the youth of Rhode Island. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted by,



John H Straus, M.D.

Medical Director Special Projects, Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership
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