

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

The Honorable Melissa Murray, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Room 211
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for [SB2886](#) – Joint Commission to Study Ways to Maximize Revenue for Child Welfare and Children’s Behavioral Health Services

Chair Murray and Honorable Members of the Committee,

On behalf of NAFI Rhode Island, I am writing to express **support for SB2886**, which would establish a joint legislative commission to study ways to maximize revenue for child welfare and children’s behavioral health services in Rhode Island.

For many years, Rhode Island has relied heavily on Medicaid to finance children’s behavioral health services. While Medicaid is an essential and indispensable source of support for medically necessary care, it was not designed to fund the full continuum of prevention, early intervention, and family stabilization services that help keep children safe and families strong.

In practice, this reliance can blur the distinction between medically necessary behavioral health treatment and child welfare prevention and intervention services, which often require different funding approaches. Many states address this challenge by utilizing a broader mix of federal funding sources, including **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Title IV-B, Title IV-E, Social Services Block Grants, and Family First Prevention Services Act resources**, alongside state investments and dedicated prevention funding such as Children’s Trust Funds.

We support the bill’s creation of a cross-sector legislative commission that brings together policymakers, state agencies, providers, and experts to examine these issues, identify barriers to accessing federal funds, and recommend strategies to maximize revenue while protecting services for children and families.

Rhode Island’s children and families benefit when prevention, behavioral health, child welfare, education, and health systems are aligned and adequately resourced. SB2886 represents an important step toward ensuring that Rhode Island’s financing strategies support that goal.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to strengthening the systems that serve Rhode Island’s children and families.

Sincerely,
Cynthia Livsey, M.S., LMHC
Regional Director
NAFI Rhode Island