



March 10, 2026

Senator Melissa Murray
Chair, Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: In Support of S2886 – An Act relating to human services – joint commission to study ways to maximize revenue for child welfare and children’s behavioral health services

Dear Chairwoman Murray, and members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services,

I write today on behalf of Youth Villages to enthusiastically support S2886 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.

Youth Villages is a national organization dedicated to helping vulnerable children and their families live successfully through two evidence-based and evidence-informed services offered across the country in 29 states; including Rhode Island, Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. With child safety as our primary focus, Intercept® is a nationally recognized model that helps vulnerable youth from birth to 18 years old by providing intensive support to families in their home and community. This program is used to divert children, a majority of which are involved with the state child welfare system, from costlier and often less effective out-of-home placements or to reunify children with family.

In Fall 2024, we were thrilled to be awarded a contract with DCYF to provide home-based services and improve health outcomes for youth associated with the state system through our evidence-based Intercept® program. This contract allowed us to begin offering Intercept services to Rhode Island youth for the first time and we served our first youth in September 2024. Through December 2025, we served 192 youth through Intercept. We typically provide services to youth and families for six to nine months before discharge. Our Intercept program has proven results across the country; across the United States in FY25, 88% of youth were living at home or independently, 91% had no further involvement with the law, and 97% had graduated, were in school, or were employed at one year post-discharge.¹

DCYF has invested in their youth and families by providing up to 83 youth and families per day access to the Intercept program. A key part of our Intercept program is to partner with DCYF to provide holistic services to the youth and families we serve, particularly in connecting them with behavioral health care services.

For years, Rhode Island has relied heavily on Medicaid to finance children’s behavioral health services and while Medicaid is an essential and indispensable source of support for medically necessary care, it

¹ <https://youthvillages.org/about-us/annual-report/>

was not designed to fund the full continuum of prevention, early intervention, and family stabilization services needed to keep children safe. 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. Diversifying funding streams allows states to strengthen prevention systems, support families earlier, and ensure that Medicaid resources remain focused on clinical services for children who need them.

Youth Villages has experience with other states in the nation in making use of various funding pathways to provide Intercept services in their state. Intercept is a well-supported program under the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse which through the end of Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026 allows states to seek 50% federal reimbursement for eligible state expenditures on the program. However, beginning in FFY27 reimbursement for eligible expenses increases to the state's FMAP which in Rhode Island is 57.81%. Utilizing evidence-based practices to address the needs of children and families that are eligible for reimbursement can assist the state in diversifying federal funds.

Youth Villages supports 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.

Lastly, we would like to extend our gratitude to Senator DiPalma and his esteemed co-sponsors for their leadership of this important bill. I urge the Committee to pass S2886 to support providers like Youth Villages in continuing to provide high quality and effective services for the youth and families of Rhode Island.

Thank you to the committee for your diligence, advocacy, and support for our work and for the kids and families we serve,

Matt Stone, MSSW
Executive Director
Youth Villages New England