



The Honorable Melissa Murray
Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
State of Rhode Island Senate
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Murray and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sarah Kelly-Palmer, LICSW, and I serve as the Chief of Behavioral Health at Family Service of Rhode Island (FSRI). Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter in support of Senate Bill S 3058, legislation that will strengthen the operational infrastructure necessary to support Rhode Island's 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

FSRI is one of Rhode Island's primary providers of Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS), delivering rapid, community-based crisis intervention to children, youth, and families.

The launch of the 988 Lifeline has been a positive step forward in expanding access to behavioral health crisis services. It is an essential entry point for individuals seeking help. However, 988 cannot stand alone. For Rhode Island's crisis system to function effectively, it must operate under a "no wrong door" philosophy—one in which every Rhode Islander, regardless of how they seek help, is connected quickly and seamlessly to the right level of care. This is especially important for children and families who need MRSS services. Many times, MRSS referrals are received through a third-party such as school or pediatrician. Getting the referral directly to us as a provider enables us to respond as quickly as possible, with an average response time for urgent calls that is under an hour. It is essential that MRSS providers be able to receive calls directly, in addition to through the 988 system.

FSRI looks forward to partnering with 988 to utilize the infrastructure support offered through this legislation to ensure that children and families can access MRSS services through 988 while maintaining fidelity to the MRSS model which operates from a "just go" perspective, or screening families in rather than screening out. This is the opposite of how 988 currently categorizes their call success. We are committed to working with 988 to ensure that the specialized care that children and youth require is realized within the crisis continuum.

By investing in the operations behind 988 and reinforcing a no-wrong-door approach, Rhode Island is investing in earlier intervention, reduced hospitalizations, safer communities, and better outcomes for all.

Sincerely,

Sarah Kelly-Palmer
Sarah Kelly-Palmer, LICSW
Chief of Behavioral Health