



March 24, 2026

The Honorable Chairwoman Melissa Murray  
Honorable Members of Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senate Lounge  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: S3065- An Act Relating to Insurance, Accident and Sickness Insurance Policies**

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of Tides Family Services, I write to express our strong support for S3065, legislation that strengthens coverage and reimbursement for Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) for children and youth experiencing acute behavioral health crises.

S3065 ensures that commercial health insurers cover MRSS and reimburse certified providers at rates no lower than the prevailing Medicaid rate established by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS). The legislation also protects the integrity of the MRSS model by ensuring that utilization management practices do not interfere with the ability of providers to deliver rapid, real-time crisis response when a child is in distress. These protections are necessary to sustain a service that families rely on when immediate behavioral health intervention is required.

As one of Rhode Island's two certified MRSS providers, Tides Family Services has been at the forefront of delivering this critical service to children and families across the state. Our crisis teams respond when a child is experiencing a behavioral health emergency—often in homes, schools, or community settings—providing immediate assessment, de-escalation, and stabilization while connecting families to ongoing supports.

The evidence is clear: MRSS works. By providing rapid, community-based intervention, MRSS significantly reduces unnecessary emergency department visits, inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations, and law enforcement involvement. This approach produces better clinical outcomes for children and families while also generating meaningful cost savings for both commercial insurers and Medicaid by avoiding far more expensive levels of care.

Rhode Island has spent years building what many consider to be a strong, nationally recognized MRSS model—one that prioritizes rapid response, family engagement, and stabilization in the least restrictive setting possible. That model is working. However, the long-term sustainability of this system is now at risk.



Today, MRSS providers are being asked to maintain a 24/7 crisis response system without a reimbursement structure that adequately reflects the cost of delivering these services. At the same time, proposed policy shifts risk moving Rhode Island away from fidelity to the nationally recognized MRSS model toward an Alternative Workforce Provider (AWP) approach that could dilute the clinical crisis-response framework that has made MRSS effective. Taken together, these pressures threaten the capacity and stability of a system that families across Rhode Island rely on in moments of crisis.

Without legislative action to ensure appropriate coverage and reimbursement across both Medicaid and commercial insurance, MRSS providers will face increasing challenges sustaining the workforce, infrastructure, and rapid-response capacity required to operate these services statewide.

S3065 is an important step toward stabilizing this system and ensuring that Rhode Island protects the progress it has made in building a community-based behavioral health crisis response model for children and youth.

When a child is experiencing a behavioral health crisis, families cannot wait hours—or days—for help. They need trained professionals who can respond immediately, stabilize the situation, and support the child and family through an extremely difficult moment. MRSS provides that response, and Rhode Island must protect and sustain it.

Tides Family Services respectfully urges the committee to give S3065 favorable consideration.

Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to the behavioral health and well-being of Rhode Island's children and families.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth A. Bixby, LICSW  
Chief Executive Officer  
Tides Family Services