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**Testimony Re: House Bill 6118- Acute Mental Health Mobile
Response and Stabilization Services**

House Health and Human Services Committee

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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its strong support for House Bill 6118. We would like to thank Representative Tanzi for sponsoring this important bill and Representatives Potter, McGaw, Cruz, Morales, Kislak, Diaz, Casimiro, and Felix for cosponsoring. This bill would require commercial insurers to cover mobile response stabilization services for acute mental health crises, ensuring families with private insurance have access to the same level of crisis response services as families covered by Medicaid.

Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) provide mobile, on-site and rapid intervention for children and youth experiencing an acute behavioral health crisis. These services allow for immediate de-escalation in the least restrictive setting and allow for stabilization and intercession before urgent situations become costly and dangerous emergencies.

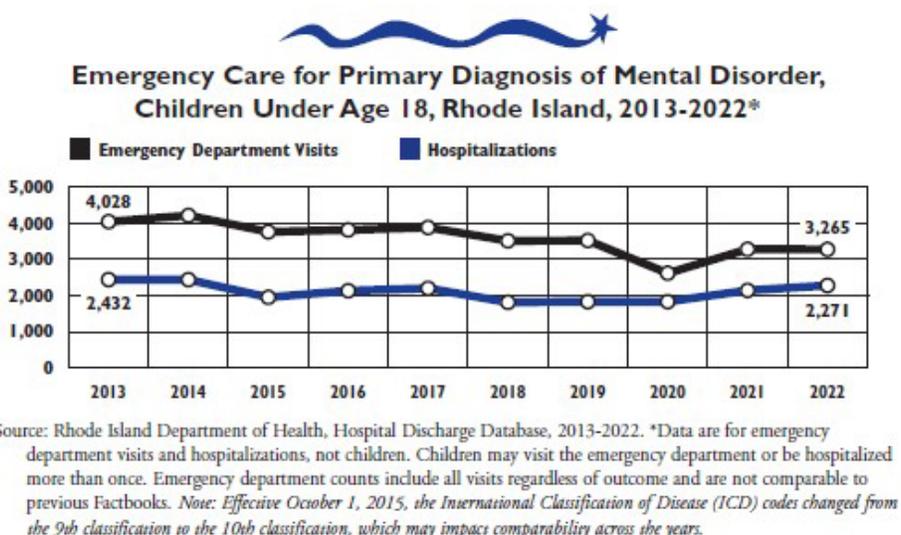
Mobile response and stabilization services are a lifeline for children and families experiencing acute mental health distress. They provide rapid response, urgent assessment, and early intervention for children and youth experiencing severe behavioral health challenges, such as aggression, self-injury, trauma, acute depression and anxiety, suicidal or homicidal thoughts, and extreme parent-child conflict. They can intervene in schools, homes, communities or emergency departments. **The MRSS workforce is specifically trained to respond to children, youth, and caregivers.** Services are available 24/7, 365 days per year, and respond within one hour. They provide face-to-face intervention, crisis de-escalation, needs assessment, and safety planning for families with children in crisis. Stabilization services and connections to additional resources and support are available for up to six to eight weeks following the intervention.

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Currently, children and youth enrolled in Medicaid have access to these essential services through Certified Community Behavioral Health

Clinics (CCBHCs). However, 53% of Rhode Island children under age 19 were covered by private health insurance in 2022, most of which was obtained through their parents' employers. Children and youth with private insurance also deserve access to timely and tailored crisis support that addresses both the immediate situation and the underlying causes. MRSS is primarily reimbursed through Medicaid as a service of local CCBHCs, which are funded through a time-limited federal grant. Of the private insurers in Rhode Island, only Blue Cross Blue Shield RI covers MRSS.

Mobile response and stabilization services work. Between November 2022 and February 2024, [92% of children referred to MRSS were deferred from emergency departments and stabilized.](#) An immediate risk assessment can divert children and youth from emergency departments and juvenile justice system involvement, preventing unnecessary and costly hospitalizations and out-of-home placements.



In 2022, Rhode Island declared a [Child and Adolescent Mental Health State of Emergency](#). There were [over 3,000 emergency department visits and 2,271 hospitalizations in 2022](#) for Rhode Island children under age 18 with a primary diagnosis of a mental disorder. There were 2,448 emergency department visits and 1,349 hospitalizations of youth ages 13-19 due to suicide attempts or intentional self-harm between 2018 and 2022, [and 9% of Rhode Island high school students reported attempting suicide one or more times in the past year.](#)

Children and youth need and deserve specialized, timely care for mental health crises that meet them where they are in their homes, schools, and communities and provide them with appropriate stabilization, support, and referrals to thrive.

We urge you to pass H-6118 and ensure that mobile response and stabilization services are available to support all children and youth. These services are vital in supporting the well-being and mental health of our children, promoting family stability, and reducing unnecessary health care costs by connecting children, youth, and families to the services and supports they need. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.