



Washington County Coalition for Children

To: Chair Rep. Susan Donovan and the House Health & Human Services Committee

Date: March 19, 2024

RE: **Support for H7874 Private Insurance Coverage for Youth Mobile Crisis Services**

I write on behalf of the Washington County Coalition for Children in strong support of H7874 requiring private insurance plans to provide coverage for youth mobile crisis and stabilization services.

We see this legislation as vital to securing a **long-term sustainable funding stream** for an **effective behavioral health crisis system for our youth**. With the implementation of 9-8-8 and successful implementation of Mobile Response and Crisis Stabilization Services by Tides Family Services and Family Service of RI, we finally have the building blocks for ending the shameful boarding of children and youth in our Emergency Depts. Over 1000 children were boarded in ED's last year.

EOHHS's current plan for providing mobile crisis services is to build the responsibility into their CCBHC contracts, which will begin Oct. 1, 2024. Youth Mobile Crisis Services will be available to all children regardless of insurance. But CCBHCs will only be able to bill Medicaid for their services. Why should private insurers get off the hook and the state or more likely CCBHC vendors absorb these costs? The model should be similar to that of Early Intervention, all children found eligible for services receive them and private insurers are expected to pay for those services.

With only 1/3 of our children covered by Medicaid in Washington County, we have found ourselves unable to secure services because providers cannot afford to serve our area given the low reimbursement rates. To secure needed crisis services for ALL children in RI that need them, we need to **think beyond time-limited federal grants and Medicaid billing**. This short-term thinking and lack of vision has contributed to the broken and fragmented system of care we have in RI for children's behavioral health. With the implementation of 9-8-8, we have the opportunity to design a system that truly works. Your challenge is making it sustainable. This bill is a step in the right direction.

With a functioning and sustainable crisis system in place, you could end the boarding of our children in crisis in local EDs by requiring private insurers to pay for these services. For all these reasons, I urge you to pass H7874.

Sincerely,

Director

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