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From: John Tassoni <john@jtsentinelgroup.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 8, 2025 8:58 AM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Subject: 6118- 4/10/ 2025

Chair, Rhode Island cannot afford to relegate the youth not covered by Medicaid to the uncertainty of grants for this critical service. Just as we cover the costs of physical injuries through our insurance systems, we must ensure that crisis services are an integral part of the continuum of care and covered by all insurance carriers. Mental health crises are no less urgent than physical injuries, and timely, appropriate intervention can mean the difference between life and death for our youth. This bill is a critical step in ensuring that all children and youth in Rhode Island, regardless of their insurance coverage, have access to the care they need in a crisis.

Mobile response and stabilization services are a lifeline for children and families during moments of acute mental health distress. These services provide rapid response, assessment, and early intervention for children and youth experiencing severe behavioral health challenges, such as aggression, self-injury, trauma, severe depression, anxiety, suicidal or homicidal thoughts, and extreme parent-child conflict.

Currently, youth who are enrolled in Medicaid will have access to these essential services through Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs). However, according to RI Kids Count, 49% of Rhode Island's children under the age of 19 are covered by private health insurance, most of which is obtained through their parent's employers. It is essential that we close the gap in access to these life-saving services by requiring commercial insurance providers to cover children's mobile response and stabilization services as a bundled service with a rate that is at least equal to the Medicaid rate. This will ensure that all families, regardless of what health plan they are covered by, have access to the care and support they need during times of crisis.

This legislation not only promotes equity in access to mental health services, but also aligns with our broader goal of fostering healthier, more resilient communities. Mental health challenges do not discriminate based on insurance coverage or income, and neither should access to care. By requiring comprehensive coverage across both Medicaid and commercial insurance plans, we ensure that no child or family is left behind in moments of crisis.

I urge the Committee to pass H6118 and ensure that mobile response and stabilization services are a fundamental part of Rhode Island's mental health care system. These services are vital to supporting the well-being of children, promoting family stability, and ultimately improving the health of our children.

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