



Testimony Re: H5200 Budget Article 9: Medical Assistance -- Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics and Cedar Rate Increase
Senate Finance Committee

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for sections of Budget Article 9 relating to Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) and Cedar Rate Increases. This article would allow for proper implementation of behavioral health services for youth and families in Rhode Island and provide adequate support for these critical services.

Importance and Impacts of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics on Children and Adolescents

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs): CCBHCs are designed to provide a comprehensive range of mental health and substance use disorder services to vulnerable individuals, especially meeting the needs of complex populations including children and adolescents. This Rhode Island-specific program model would be designed to provide comprehensive mental health and substance use disorder services to vulnerable individuals throughout the entire life cycle.

Implementation of CCBHCs in Rhode Island should align with the existing behavioral health care resources for youth (e.g., Kids Link and Community Mental Health Organizations) and strengthen resources, including addressing the current behavioral health workforce crisis. We respectfully urge this committee to provide adequate support for the CCBHC model so that it can be successfully implemented.

Importance of Cedar Family Centers and Need for Rate Increase

Cedar Family Centers help kids with RIte Care/Medicaid insurance who have special needs navigate medical, therapeutic, and educational services. These are frequently difficult-to-navigate programs with waitlists and complex requirements, and Cedar staff work with families, frequently for extended periods, to get the necessary services in place for their kids. Cedar centers received no state-based COVID-19 relief, and did not have a rate increase last year. This rate increase would help stabilize this critical program. Currently providers can't add capacity and assist all the children and families who could benefit from these services with the current funding structure.

Due to the pressing youth behavioral and special health care needs in Rhode Island, we urge the Committee to support implementation of CCBHCs and provide adequate support for Cedar Family centers. Both are critical to helping create a seamless and coordinated system of care to support children as they grow. Children need the right care, at the right time, in the right place and there is an urgent need to support and address the current gaps in the children's behavioral health system of care.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

