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**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024**

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**SENATE RESOLUTION**

RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THE SECRETARY OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES TO DEVELOP A PLAN FOR ESTABLISHING A  
SINGLE UNIFIED SYSTEM OF INTEGRATED BEHAVIORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH  
CARE SERVICES FOR ACROSS THE LIFE-CYCLE

Introduced By: Senator Joshua Miller

Date Introduced: June 13, 2024

Referred To: Placed on the Senate Consent Calendar

1           WHEREAS, It is in the interest of all Rhode Islanders for the State to maintain a system  
2 of publicly funded behavioral and mental health care that has the capacity to provide equitable  
3 access to high quality services throughout the life-cycle; and

4           WHEREAS, The State currently operates two somewhat distinct systems of publicly  
5 funded behavioral and mental health care -- one for children and their families and another for  
6 adults, 21 and older, in need of programs and services; and

7           WHEREAS, Although there are areas where the two systems intersect, differences in the  
8 ways they are administered and operate often make the pathway to services and transitions  
9 between them difficult for Rhode Islanders to navigate and understand; and

10           WHEREAS, Maintaining the two systems also impedes the State's ability to fully  
11 leverage limited resources, expand best practices, and develop and sustain provider networks,  
12 programs, services, and supports that foster community integration without regard to age, family  
13 structure or circumstance; and

14           WHEREAS, A recent RI Senate Report on publicly funded health and human services in  
15 Rhode Island recommended establishing a unified system of State behavioral and mental health  
16 services under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services Secretariat by consolidating  
17 existing services and programs administered by the RI Department of Children, Youth and  
18 Families (DCYF) and the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Development Disabilities and

1 Hospitals (BHDDH); and

2 WHEREAS, The Senate Report recommended the unified system of care be located in a  
3 redesigned BHDDH, as it currently serves as the State mental health authority, under the EOHHS  
4 umbrella pending the transition of the administration and operations of the state-operated  
5 hospitals currently under the department's jurisdiction into a new agency dedicated solely to the  
6 management of state public health facilities; and

7 WHEREAS, The realignment of the State-operated hospitals is not expected to be  
8 completed until July 2025, the DCYF is still in the process of obtaining accreditation and  
9 implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act, and the network of Rhode Island the  
10 Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics, overseen by EOHHS, is just launching, it is  
11 essential that a plan be developed for establishing the unified system that considers these and  
12 other related factors and their impact on the agencies affected, funding sources, provider  
13 networks, and, most important, the people and communities we serve; and

14 WHEREAS, The development of such a plan must take into account federal actions  
15 directing the State to address issues and concerns related to access and utilization across the two  
16 existing systems and ensure they are appropriately mediated; and

17 WHEREAS, The plan must also be aligned with other State health planning efforts and  
18 systematically and intentionally include strategies for improving equitable access to high quality  
19 behavioral and mental health care and substance use treatment across the life-cycle based on:  
20 trends in the need for services, providers, programs and facilities, the scope of resources  
21 required to meet that need today and over time, and, on this basis, the priorities and the action  
22 steps for achieving the goal of implementing a unified system of care; now, therefore be it

23 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby respectfully requests  
24 the Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to initiate the planning  
25 process to establish a unified system of care for publicly funded behavioral and mental health  
26 care and substance use treatment by no later than 7/1/2026. The system of care shall be  
27 administered by (BHDDH) within the Executive Department of the State to serve as the State  
28 agency responsible for overseeing and administering the organization, finance, management and  
29 delivery of programs and services across the life-cycle. The plan shall facilitate and effectuate the  
30 timely and seamless transfer of budget and personnel from these facilities current home agencies.  
31 The Secretary may request technical assistance from expert vendors and from the departments  
32 and facilities involved to assist in the planning process; and be it further

33 RESOLVED, That this Senate hereby further requests that the Secretary shall be  
34 authorized to:

1           • Prepare and execute an umbrella memorandum of understanding (“MOU”) specifying  
2 the conditions for providing to the EOHHS any information in the possession of the home  
3 agencies of the facilities that is protected as confidential under applicable federal or state laws or  
4 regulations that may be necessary for the Executive Office to operate in accordance with this  
5 Resolution; and

6           • The Departments under the EOHHS umbrella and, such other departments and agencies  
7 of the State as may be appropriate from time to time, shall assist and cooperate with the EOHHS  
8 and shall allocate or provide resources, including staff, as appropriate at the request of the  
9 Secretary in furtherance of this Resolution; and be it further

10           RESOLVED, That the Secretary shall provide regular and timely reports to the Senate  
11 and Governor and that a report presenting the plan for unifying the system of care including any  
12 finding and recommendations of the planning process and an implementation timeline shall be  
13 presented to the Senate and Governor by no later than 4/1/25. The report shall outline each  
14 milestone that must be achieved for a successful transition of responsibilities, financing and  
15 personnel and any associated costs; and be it further

16           RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
17 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Secretary of the Executive Office of Health  
18 and Human Services.

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