



Adoption Rhode Island

Children First, and Always.

April 27, 2021

Representative Joseph McNamara, Chair
Committee on Health, Education and Welfare
Rhode Island State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: H5936
A N A C T RELATING TO EDUCATION --
HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS -- TRAUMA
INFORMED SCHOOLS ACT

Dear Chairman McNamara and members of the Committee:

I am writing to support the above named bill. This bill will create the *Trauma Informed School Act*. There are many, many reasons why we support trauma informed policies, practices and interventions for child serving organizations. Here are a few that support building trauma competency across our educational systems.

- * **Childhood trauma is one of the most critical public health concerns for children today.** Because schools see large numbers of children come through their doors daily, they are an ideal setting for identifying and working towards healing trauma.
- **Research supports that benefits of becoming a trauma-informed school** can improve school climate, increase teacher satisfaction, reduce student behavioral outbursts and reduce stress for students and teachers. (Oehlburg, B. (2008). *Why Schools Need to be Trauma Informed. Trauma and Loss: Research and Interventions*)
- * **The National Association of School Psychologists has pointed out that trauma informed schools promote:** Feelings of physical, social, and emotional safety in students, a shared understanding among staff about the impact of trauma and adversity on students,

positive and culturally responsive discipline policies and practices, access to comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services and effective community collaboration

- **School is not only a place where the consequences of trauma exposure are manifested, but it can be a critical contributor to a child's healing and coping.**
- **More than 60 percent of children in the US have been exposed to a traumatic event within the year; 20 percent of which reported experiencing three or more events.**
- * **In Rhode Island, one in 5 children have a diagnosable mental health disorder, approximately 2000 children are in foster care, 1,475 children are homeless and there are more than 2,000 indicated allegations of abuse of children each year, 2,200 children had emergency room visits for mental health related needs and 15% had considered suicide. (RI KidsCount, 2020)**
- **COVID-19 has brought about a complex array of factors that have an impact on the mental health of children, families and educators.** Our approach to mitigating the impacts of COVID on children will need long-term and multi-prong strategies. Creating systems that nurture well-being, promote resiliency and assist in healing children from the impacts of trauma and toxic stress are critical to building and fostering our children and next generation of workforce.

In summary, I support legislation that would help all of our children, but particularly our most vulnerable children, learn grow and thrive by ensuring that there is trauma sensitivity and approaches across the education system.

Respectfully submitted;



Darlene Allen
CEO and Executive Director