



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
Department of Children, Youth and Families
Director's Office
101 Friendship St.
Providence, RI 02903

May 20, 2025

The Honorable Marvin Abney, Chairman
House Committee on Finance
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: 2025 H-5077 – Requiring DCYF to establish and manage segregated savings account for foster care children receiving certain public benefits and keep child eligible for future benefits.

Dear Chairman Abney:

Thank you for your commitment to improving the lives of Rhode Island's youth and for carefully considering House Bill 5077. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF or department) acknowledges the well-intentioned objectives of this bill to ensure that youth in care receive and retain access to crucial benefits.

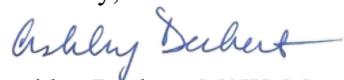
However, the department has significant concerns about the practical implementation of certain provisions, which would likely result in substantial strain the department's resources. This bill presents challenges that would hinder the department's ability to effectively serve Rhode Island's most vulnerable children.

Specifically, Section 1(b) of the bill mandates that the department assess each youth in care for potential eligibility for benefits and file applications on their behalf. This requirement would necessitate a considerable increase in staff to conduct these assessments, prepare and submit applications, handle appeals, and manage the ongoing case work related to these benefits. Further, the act would require dedicated staff who are not only trained on the plethora of available benefits and how to apply for them, but they would also need to keep abreast of changes to those benefits regularly.

The requirements for ongoing monitoring of asset and resource limits, as detailed in Section 1(d)(4), and the annual accounting requirements outlined in Section 1(f), further exacerbate the need for increased staffing and resources. These provisions demand detailed record-keeping, regular reviews, and complex financial management, which our current staff cannot accommodate.

While DCYF is committed to maximizing resources for youth in care, the significant fiscal impact of H5077 cannot be overlooked. The department urges the committee to carefully consider both the financial and operational implications of this bill. DCYF appreciates the opportunity to express its concerns regarding this legislation.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Ashley Deckert in blue ink.

Ashley Deckert, MSW, MA
Director

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Judiciary
The Honorable Julie A. Casimiro
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy