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Wednesday, March 11, 2026

The Honorable Teresa Tanzi, Chair
House Finance Subcommittee on Human Services
Room 35
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: FY 2027 Budget Articles – RI Department of Children, Youth, and Families

Chair Tanzi and Members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Human Services,

On behalf of **Community Solutions, Inc.**, I am writing regarding the **FY 2027 proposed budget article for the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF).**

Our organization, Community Solutions, is located in Coventry, Rhode Island, with our main office based in Connecticut. For more than 30 years, we have proudly served the youth of Rhode Island in partnership with the Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF). Throughout these decades, we have built a strong reputation for supporting young people through difficult circumstances and helping them move toward stability, healing, and successful reunification with their families and communities.

Community Solutions has been an important part of Rhode Island's network of providers dedicated to supporting, healing, and advocating for youth with complex needs. By working collaboratively with DCYF, schools, courts, and other service providers across the state, we have maintained a strong record of successful reunifications and reduced recidivism among the youth we serve.

Our program operates out of a welcoming eight-bed colonial home in Coventry. The residence provides a safe, structured, and nurturing environment designed to help youth stabilize and build essential life skills. The home features a large yard that allows youth to play, participate in recreational activities, and enjoy time outdoors—an important part of promoting both physical and emotional well-being.

Within this setting, our dedicated staff work closely with each resident to provide individualized support, structure, and guidance. Our focus is on helping youth develop coping skills, strengthen relationships, continue their education, and prepare for successful transitions back to family or into independent living when appropriate.

At Community Solutions, we believe that every young person deserves the opportunity to heal, grow, and succeed. Our long-standing partnership with the State of Rhode Island reflects our shared commitment to providing compassionate care and meaningful opportunities for the youth we serve.

We appreciate the Committee's ongoing commitment to strengthening Rhode Island's system of care for children and families. As the state moves forward with significant changes to Medicaid financing and service delivery, we respectfully raise several concerns that we believe require careful consideration during the budget process.

First, the current Medicaid transformation process presents potential risks to service availability and provider stability. Community-based providers that deliver critical behavioral health and child welfare services must be able to sustain operations under any new rate structures. It will be important to ensure that rates are adequate and that implementation is informed by real-world data on provider costs, workforce capacity, and service demand.

Second, children's service systems must maintain flexibility to respond to the complex and evolving needs of youth and families. Children's needs often change rapidly, and services must be able to adjust accordingly. Families frequently rely on providers to tailor supports, coordinate services across systems, and respond quickly when a young person is in crisis. Preserving the flexibility to adapt services in real time is essential to achieving positive outcomes.

Third, sufficient General Revenue and other flexible funding sources remain critical. Unlike adult systems, children's behavioral health and child welfare services cannot rely exclusively on Medicaid reimbursement. Prevention services, family stabilization efforts, and other supports often require funding streams that allow agencies to intervene early and respond holistically to a child's circumstances.

This flexibility is particularly important for DCYF, which relies heavily on community-based agencies that can pivot quickly to meet the needs of youth involved in the child welfare system. It is important to consider how this responsiveness will function in a more rigid Medicaid reimbursement environment.

Fourth, the transition to new financing and administrative structures creates real and unfunded costs for providers. Our agency will face new reporting requirements, data system upgrades, workforce training needs, and administrative changes associated with transformation. Without adequate support, these costs will strain our organization and others like ours that are already operating with limited margins.

Finally, we encourage the Committee to ensure that the budget includes sufficient resources to meet the requirements of the **federal consent decree governing Rhode Island's children's behavioral health system**. This includes investments in system planning, a comprehensive needs assessment of services and programs, and the infrastructure necessary for effective implementation.

Rhode Island has made important commitments to improving services for children with behavioral health needs. Achieving those goals will require careful attention to financing structures, provider sustainability, and the flexibility necessary to serve children effectively.

Thank you for your continued attention to these issues and for your commitment to Rhode Island's children and families.

Sincerely,

Theresa Lefebvre
Program Director
Community Solutions, Inc.