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## **ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT**

### **TESTIMONY ON 26-H 7051, RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT – DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES May 14, 2026**

The ACLU of Rhode Island supports this legislation which would require the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) to screen children in their care to determine if they are eligible for federal benefits. If the child is eligible for these benefits, the legislation directs DCYF to apply for them and create a segregated savings account for those funds to be used by the child as they transition into adulthood. This bill would additionally prohibit DCYF from using such benefits to reimburse the state for the child's placement in foster care. This is an important step towards ensuring that children in foster care receive the full benefit of resources intended for their support and their future success.

Children in foster care face numerous barriers when they age out of the foster care system and enter adulthood. Many children leave foster care without access to stable housing, healthcare, transportation, or to the financial support, educational, and employment opportunities to which their peers may have access. Securing benefits and creating these accounts for children in foster care will help them to eventually tackle these barriers.

Currently, many state child welfare agencies use these funds to reimburse costs incurred by the state to care for the child. This phenomenon directly deprives these young beneficiaries of resources that could be saved and used for their future success once they leave foster care. It also treats children differently solely because of their status. Children in foster care who are not eligible for these benefits are not then required to reimburse the state for the costs of their care.

We strongly believe that establishing these accounts and ensuring children in foster care are the recipients of these benefits is vital to ensure their future success as they leave foster care. We therefore urge passage of this legislation.<sup>1</sup>

Thank you for considering our views.

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<sup>1</sup> We understand that amendments may be proposed to expand the age range for which the bill would apply. The ACLU fully supports that effort.