

May 14, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney, Chair  
House Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: Support H7796 – Legislation Establishing a Joint Commission to Maximize Revenue for Child Welfare and Children’s Behavioral Health Services**

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

On behalf of the 44 member organizations of the Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families (RICCF), I write in support of legislation establishing a joint legislative commission to study ways to maximize revenue for child welfare and children’s behavioral health services in Rhode Island.

RICCF represents organizations across the state that provide behavioral health treatment, child welfare services, foster care supports, residential care, family stabilization programs, and community-based services for children and families. Our members work every day with children facing complex behavioral health challenges, trauma, family instability, and involvement across multiple systems of care.

Rhode Island’s children’s behavioral health and child welfare systems rely on a complicated mix of federal and state funding streams. As the state continues broader Medicaid and fiscal transformation efforts, it is critical that policymakers carefully evaluate how funding structures impact access to care, provider sustainability, prevention services, and long-term system stability.

For many years, Rhode Island has relied heavily on Medicaid to finance eligible child welfare as well as children’s behavioral health services. Medicaid remains an essential and indispensable source of support for medically necessary treatment and clinical care. However, Medicaid alone was never designed to finance the full continuum of prevention, early intervention, family support, and stabilization services necessary to keep children safely at home and prevent deeper system involvement.

As a result, important distinctions between clinical behavioral health treatment and broader child welfare prevention services can become blurred, creating challenges for providers, families, and state systems alike. Many services that support children and families most effectively do not fit neatly into traditional Medicaid reimbursement structures.

Other states have successfully strengthened children’s systems by leveraging a broader combination of federal funding opportunities, including:

- Title IV-E and Family First Prevention Services Act resources
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

- Title IV-B child welfare funding
- Social Services Block Grants
- Dedicated prevention and family support investments

A more diversified and coordinated financing strategy can help Rhode Island strengthen prevention services, stabilize providers, improve family outcomes, and ensure Medicaid resources remain focused on clinical care where appropriate.

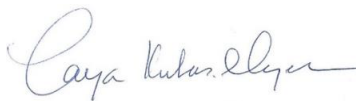
This issue is especially urgent given ongoing uncertainty surrounding federal Medicaid policy and future funding stability. Rhode Island should proactively evaluate every opportunity to maximize available federal resources and align funding strategies across agencies and systems.

RICCF strongly supports the creation of a cross-sector legislative commission that brings together policymakers, providers, advocates, and state agencies to examine these issues comprehensively, identify barriers to accessing federal funds, and recommend sustainable long-term financing strategies for children's services.

Rhode Island's children and families benefit when behavioral health, child welfare, education, and family support systems are coordinated, adequately resourced, and prevention-oriented. This legislation represents an important step toward building a stronger and more sustainable system of care.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Rhode Island's children and families.

Sincerely,



Tanja Kubas Meyer  
Executive Director  
RI Coalition for Children and Families