



The Honorable Marvin Abney, Chair
House Committee on Finance
Room 35
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H8603

June 1, 2026

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Adoption Rhode Island regarding the above number bill. This bill would exempt foster and adopted youth ages 16-21 from the fees associated with drivers' education classes at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI). This bill will take effect upon passage. This bill will help foster and adopted youth enroll in a previously established 33-hour course offered by CCRI.

Adoption Rhode Island is a private non-profit organization that provides a range of community-based services to meet the needs of foster, adopted, kin, and other children and youth impacted by trauma. We help to promote and support permanency for children, provide trauma -focused behavioral health treatment, educational support and advocacy for transition age foster youth, prevent homelessness' in youth aging out of foster care, support stable housing for young adults, provide professional development services for social workers and educators and more. We provide education, advocacy, technical assistance, and support to approximately two thousand children, youth, and families across Rhode Island annually. We are invested in supporting policies that help children thrive and youth succeed as they transition into adulthood. Every year we help countless youth as they search for resources to attend drivers education. This critical course is often difficult for foster youth to attend due to financial and placement restrictions. This bill helps to address barriers faced by foster youth.

Drivers' education is vital for foster youth because it removes transportation barriers to employment and education. Without it, these youth are heavily disadvantaged as they age out of the foster care system. Reliable transportation expands where these youth can work and go to school. Foster youth who obtain driver's licenses are significantly more likely to continue their education and maintain steady jobs. A license allows youth to independently access healthcare, extracurricular activities, and social networks without relying on case workers or

often unpredictable public transit. Obtaining a license is an invaluable step toward creating normal teenage experiences and preparing a youth in foster care to transition out of care and into adulthood.

This bill will help youth overcome roadblocks in achieving independence and success. Helping youth learn to drive to their education and employment will help to improve long-term outcomes for this population. Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darlene Allen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Darlene Allen
CEO and Executive Director
Adoption Rhode Island