

House Finance Committee

Room 35

Rhode Island State House

Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for House Bill 8603 – Driver Education Fee Waiver for Youth in Foster and Adoptive Homes

Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Heather Croteau, and I serve as COPE Secretary for SEIU Local 580. I am submitting written testimony in support of House Bill 8603, which would exempt youth in foster and adoptive homes from the fees associated with driver's education classes at the Community College of Rhode Island.

For most young people, obtaining a driver's license is an important milestone that creates opportunities for employment, education, extracurricular activities, and increased independence. For youth involved with the child welfare system, however, the path to obtaining a license is often more complicated. Many foster youth lack the financial support and resources that their peers can rely upon to cover the costs associated with driver's education and licensure.

House Bill 8603 removes one of those barriers. While the cost of driver's education may seem modest, it can be a significant obstacle for young people preparing to transition into adulthood. Providing a fee waiver helps ensure that foster and adoptive youth have access to the same opportunities as their peers and are better positioned for long-term success.

Transportation remains one of the most common barriers to employment and educational advancement. A driver's license can expand access to jobs, vocational training, higher education, and community involvement. For youth aging out of foster care or preparing for greater independence, these opportunities can make a meaningful difference in their ability to achieve stability and self-sufficiency.

This legislation represents a practical investment in Rhode Island's youth. By reducing the financial barrier and supporting successful transitions to adulthood, House Bill 8603 promotes positive outcomes for young people who have already faced significant challenges.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support House Bill 8603.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Heather Croteau

COPE Secretary, SEIU Local 580