State of Rhode Island

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

October 28, 2021

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chairman
House Committee on Finance
State House, Room 35
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: Support for Governor's Supplemental Request to Amend FY 2022 Appropriations Act, Sections 4, 6, 8 and 9

Dear Chairman Abney:

I am writing on behalf of the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) to express strong support for Sections 4, 6, 8 and 9 of Governor McKee's supplemental request to amend the FY 2022 Appropriations Act. Taken as a whole, the measures outlined in these sections will provide critical support for families involved with DCYF, youth in our Voluntary Extension of Care Program, and youth leaving DCYF Care who are facing significant housing instability and either have lost or are likely to lose their current housing.

Rhode Island, like many other states, is facing one of the most dramatic challenges to providing affordable and stable housing for our residents that we have ever faced. According to Housing Works RI's recently released 2021 Housing Factbook, "Of the nearly 32,000 lowest income renters, 74 percent are cost burdened. Of these households, more than 17,000 are severely cost burdened, meaning they are spending more than half of their income on housing." (RI Housing Works RI Factbook, HWRI_HFB21.pdf (housingworksri.org), Roger Williams University, One Empire Plaza, 02903, p. 6). Furthermore, there are no Rhode Island communities where a family making less than $30,000 can afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment and only two (Burrillville and Woonsocket) where a family making $30,000-$50,000 can afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment (2021 Housing Factbook, p. 9).

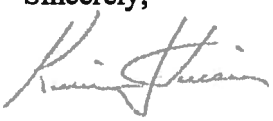
Since the start of the pandemic, DCYF has paid for hotel stays for more than a dozen families who had no stable housing and where adequate housing was a barrier to reunification. The Family Care Community Partnerships (FCCPs) funded by the Department often must use significant amounts of their budgeted flex funding to pay for hotel costs for families who have unstable housing and other needs but are not involved with DCYF due to child abuse/neglect. While we are working with housing support agencies, housing and homeless advocates, and RI Housing's Rent Relief RI program, the challenge is that there are not enough affordable housing units in the State to address the overwhelming need.

Sections 4, 6, 8 and 9 of the Governor's proposal will provide both the necessary short-term assistance and will support long-term solutions. These include incentives for developers to create new affordable housing, including land acquisition; funding for the wraparound supports

individuals and families need to secure and keep housing; and additional resources to the Office of Housing and Community Development they need to effectively implement these social infrastructure and public health needs.

The Department will continue to work with our sister State agencies, community partners including those in the Housing and Homeless Advocacy community, the Governor's Office and other stakeholders to ensure families and youth have access to safe, stable and secure housing. We ask for your support of the Governor's request to use these once-in-a-lifetime American Rescue Plan Act dollars for these purposes.

Sincerely,



Kevin Aucoin
Acting Director

cc: Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Legal Counsel to the Speaker