



State of Rhode Island  
***Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families***

February 25, 2021

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey, Chairman  
House Committee on Health and Human Services  
State House  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: 2021 H5283 – Relating to State Affairs and Government

Dear Chairman Casey:

I am writing on behalf of the Department of Children, Youth and Families and in support of the above-referenced legislation. The bill requires ongoing cultural sensitivity training for foster families. DCYF supports the concept of this bill and is already providing training that helps our resource families to support a child's cultural needs.

DCYF understands the value of meeting a child's cultural needs and recognizes that cultural and ethnic sensitivity is a foundational element of foster parenting. Prospective foster and pre-adoptive parents in Rhode Island take a 10-week course as part of their initial licensing requirements; session six focuses explicitly on this topic. According to the course description, this class "examines the importance of helping children in care maintain and build upon their identity, self-concept, and connections. It considers issues such as how children's cultures and ethnic backgrounds help shape their identity; the connections children risk losing when they enter care; and why visits and contacts with birth families and previous foster families are important."

In addition to this pre-service training, most foster families also participate in ongoing training – it is required for our therapeutic foster home providers, and participation is open to traditional foster families as well. Cultural sensitivity is weaved into the curriculum of these in-service trainings, and one of the courses offered annually is entirely devoted to cultural competency. We have greatly expanded these enrichment opportunities over the last three years and are actively partnering with community providers to ensure we have high-quality, relevant training that meets the needs of our children and the resource families who care for them.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. Aucoin  
Acting Director

cc: The Honorable Anastasia Williams  
Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services  
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Legal Counsel to the Speaker