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From: Melanie Borges <melborges@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 4, 2025 6:00 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Support of H5672

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Dear Members of the House Judiciary,

I am writing today in support of Bill-H5672, it is my hope that you will amend the RI General Law to include sibling contact, post adoption/ guardianship.

It has been my experience, unfortunately, that once an adoption/guardianship has taken place, the parties involved tend to go their own way.

My child is one of six, the children could not safely be placed together while in foster care, each of the children were placed in loving homes. We all put the needs of the children ahead of our own. The children spent 4 1/2 years in foster care, which is a very long time, and throughout that time they attended weekly visitation with their bio mom, and siblings. They all looked forward to the time spent with each other. They played, they shared, they encouraged and they celebrated each other, and while each child was learning how to be a part of their foster home, they were learning healthy boundaries from the adults that cared for them. Only they knew what they endured. The abuse and neglect, and they went through it together. In my daughters situation, she was the caretaker for her younger siblings, at the young age of seven, she was taking food from the lunch cafeteria to feed her siblings so that they didn't go hungry, she dressed them in the morning to go to school, she slept beside them to keep them warm, when the heat was turned off, and the list goes on.

We, the foster parents attended mediation and agreed to four visits per year with bio mom, these visits would include the siblings. Bio Mom has not scheduled a visit, it's been almost three years and the kids have not had the opportunity to visit with each other since the adoption took place. My daughter does not miss the life that she used to have but she does miss her siblings. This is the most difficult conversation that I have to have with her, one family has completely cut ties, and wants to move on, the other two families have a difficult time finding the time to make it work, and the two youngest that have reunified don't share the connection.

Again, it is my hope that you all understand, that it is in the best interest of the children, if they so desire to remain connected. They share a bond that many of us could ever comprehend. Please please get this right for the children, they have already faced enormous challenges, and trauma.

Sincerely,
Melanie Borges