



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
Department of Children, Youth and Families
Director's Office
101 Friendship St.
Providence, RI 02903

April 1, 2025

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr., Chairman
House Committee on Judiciary
State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: 2025 H-5298 – Relating to Delinquent and Dependent Children – Proceedings in Family Court

Dear Chairman Craven:

I am writing on behalf of the Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF or “the department”) to express concerns regarding the above-referenced legislation that requires DCYF to act as the legal guardian of a juvenile during custodial interrogations where parental rights for that juvenile have been terminated and the Family Court has appointed the department as the sole guardian of the youth. The department’s concern here is twofold:

1. Conflict of interest: In situations where DCYF is the sole guardian for both an alleged perpetrator and an alleged victim, requiring the department to act on behalf of both juveniles could create a non-waivable conflict of interest.
2. Additional expertise required: Should a circumstance arise where a youth in the sole custody of DCYF becomes the subject of a custodial interrogation, the individual who would most likely be contacted to be present during the interrogation would be the youth’s social caseworker. However, Social Caseworkers do not have legal training, and providing such a training would require additional financial resources from the department.

DCYF appreciates the opportunity to express its concerns regarding this legislation and welcomes the opportunity to work with the sponsor.

Sincerely,

Ashley Deckert, MSW, MA
Director

cc: Honorable Members of the House Committee on Judiciary
The Honorable Rebecca M. Kislak
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy