



4/1/2025

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
House Judiciary Committee
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for H5260, H5345, and H5347 regarding the Voluntary Extension of Care program.

Chair Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of **H5260, H5345, and H5347 regarding the Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC) program**. Passage of these bills will:

- Extend the voluntary extension of care (VEC) program to children in the juvenile justice system and children who attain reunification prior to their eighteenth birthday, however, the reunification is not successful (H5260);
- Extend the VEC program to children in the juvenile justice system and children who attain reunification prior to their eighteenth birthday, however, the reunification is not successful and extends care and placement by the department and legal supervision by the court until age 26 (increased from age 21) (H5345); and
- Ensure that all extended benefits offered by DCYF to foster children shall be extended to children placed in guardianship (H5347).

My name is Margaret Holland McDuff, and I am CEO of FSRI. FSRI is a behavioral health and social service organization with the mission “to advance equity, hope, and opportunity in our communities.” FSRI has been serving Rhode Islanders for decades, including programming to support healthy child development, provide essential behavioral health services, and coordinate crisis intervention programs that help children and families thrive.

FSRI is a provider of residential, foster care, and community-based services under contract with the RI Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). This includes three trauma-informed residential programs for youth and young adults, a foster care program currently providing care to over 20 children and youth, and a variety of community-based supports – including Kinship Cares, a program supporting kinship families. Our service array also includes Enhanced Case Management for youth who are enrolled in the Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC) program.

FSRI supports these bills, which ensure that VEC service are made available to any youth aging out of care of DCYF, eliminates barriers to receiving extended care, and expands the population that is able to enroll. Extending the age to 26 is a critical support, as we know that young adults not in DCYF care are able to stay on their parent’s health insurance until they are 26 years old.



The services and supports we invest in our children, youth and young adults will determine the future health and well-being of our state. If we invest in our youth, and the individuals and systems that support them, then we will have a bright future ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of these bills and the VEC program, and please feel free to contact me with any questions or follow-up.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Margaret Holland McDuff', written in a cursive style.

Margaret Holland McDuff
CEO