



Rhode Island Department of Human Services
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Office of the Director
Kimberly Merolla-Brito

January 29, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee
Chair, House Committee on Judiciary
State House
82 Smith Street
Providence RI 02903

RE: H7038 –An Act Relating to Courts and Civil Procedure—Procedure Generally—Fees

Dear Chair McEntee:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Office of Child Support Services, a division of the RI Department of Human Services, with respect to H7038 which seeks to establish a minimum fee of \$70 per service for constable fees. I am respectfully submitting this letter for the committee's consideration to convey the agency's concern and the proposed bill's unintended consequence for the state's only child support agency.

The Office of Child Support Services relies heavily on constable services to fulfill its statutory obligations to custodial parents. That is to obtain financial support from non-custodial parents, thereby helping ensure children receive the financial and emotional support they are entitled to receiving under federal law. Passage of H7038 would have a significant and immediate financial impact that would result in an estimated \$333,000 in additional unbudgeted costs.

State agencies, including OCSS, operate on strict appropriations year-to-year and the proposed legislation would place further strain on already limited resources that would negatively impact the efficiency of OCSS. These concerns are further compounded when the proposed bill does not appear to enhance service quality, access, or advance the interests of fairness.

Furthermore, the statute that would be amended through passage of H7038 was specifically designed to prevent unfair or inflated pricing by imposing reasonable limitations and safeguards. In raising the fee, the proposed bill would also eliminate flexibility agencies currently have to negotiate reasonable costs and seek cost effective service delivery.

For these reasons, I urge the House Committee on Judiciary to consider the broader impact to core agency operations and its potential impact to the families we serve.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Merolla-Brito

Kimberly Merolla-Brito
Director
RI Department of Human Services

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Judiciary
The Honorable Representative Arthur J. Corvese
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel for the Speaker of the House of Representatives
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy