



Office of the Child Advocate

State of Rhode Island

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

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Thank you, Chair McEntee and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of House Bill 7036 which will require every school district to provide assistance and cooperation within its jurisdictional power to further the objectives of this chapter, specifically, providing the courts with any information a child as the court may require.

My name is Katelyn Medeiros, and I am the Child Advocate for the State of Rhode Island. I am the Director of the agency which serves as the oversight agency to DCYF. As the oversight agency, we monitor the case of each child and young adult open to the Department to protect their legal rights and to promote policies and practices which ensure that youth are safe, and that their physical, mental, medical, educational, emotional, and behavioral health needs are met.

This bill would allow the Rhode Island Family Court to seek assistance from local school districts pertaining to students involved in state care. The bill would require local school districts to provide information to the court and cooperate in the court's goal of protecting and supporting children in state care. Including schools in proceedings before the court will provide the opportunity for a comprehensive, holistic approach to case conversation and decision-making, and will give the court the ability to ensure that the student's educational and school experiences are prioritized in the same way safety, behavioral and medical health, and legal rights are prioritized.

The OCA supports House Bill 7036, and we thank the Committee for your continued support of students involved in state care in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Medeiros, Esq.
Acting Child Advocate