



Office of the Child Advocate

State of Rhode Island

Katelyn Medeiros, Esq. - Child Advocate

childadvocate.ri.gov

35 Howard Avenue, 3rd Fl. - Cranston, RI 02920

tel: 401.462.4300

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

February 5, 2026

Thank you, Chair McEntee and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of House Bill 7438 which will provide that all benefits offered by the Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) to children in foster care shall be extended to children who have been adopted or placed in guardianship.

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.

Investing in young people who have been involved with DCYF can provide a better foundation for young people to be successful upon exiting care. Investing in programs like the Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC), provide extended supports for young people as they learn to navigate independence and adulthood. The Annie E. Casey Foundation reports extended foster care supports yield positive outcomes for young people who engage in programming. Child Trends analysis of Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System data showed that 19-year-olds in extended foster care were 69% more likely to have a high school diploma or GED, 61% more likely to have utilized financial aid for education, and 41% less likely to have experienced homelessness during the past two years.

The OCA supports opportunities to provide access to supports and services for young people in Rhode Island with lived experience in state care. As such, we support House Bill 7438 to grant the same access to services and supports to young people who were adopted or placed in guardianship including educational benefits and programming, incentive grant opportunities, and any other program across social services, behavioral and medical health, housing and employment sectors.

Thank you for your continued support of children and youth involved with the child welfare, children's behavioral health, and juvenile justice systems in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Medeiros, Esq.
Acting Child Advocate