



Office of the Child Advocate

State of Rhode Island

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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Thank you, Chairwoman Donovan and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of House Bill 7627 which would permit children with diagnosed developmental disabilities whose third birthday is between May 1 and August 31 to continue to receive early intervention services through September 1 after the child's third birthday.

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 the Department of Children, Youth & Families (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.

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) supports any and all efforts to ensure that youth open to DCYF have access to ongoing and consistent early childhood supports, services, and education. Young children with developmental disabilities require access to age appropriate and timely interventions to begin preparing them for school and to assess what supports they will require long-term. This vulnerable population cannot have gaps in access to supports and services based on when their birthday falls in a calendar year. The OCA continues to advocate at all levels to ensure that youth involved with DCYF have successful educational outcomes. To support these efforts, it is vital that these supports start immediately when needed and continue until children can access services through the Rhode Island Department of Education between ages 3-5. Early identification and delivery of services to children with developmental disabilities can improve educational outcomes, reduce long-term costs of special education, and maximize the long-term potential of educational success.

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

Sincerely,

Katelyn Medeiros, Esq.
Child Advocate