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The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chairwoman
Health and Human Services Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
State House
Providence, RI 02903

March 30, 2026

RE: H7994 — SUPPORT

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and distinguished members of the Committee,

On behalf of **MENTOR Rhode Island**, I am writing in support of **H7994**.

We provide training for the RI DCYF and know first-hand how capable and committed they are to our state's youth and families. Our state is building a more robust, community-based children's behavioral health system. One that is designed specifically to meet the unique developmental needs of children and families timely and effectively. This progress reflects years of work and a shared commitment to doing better for Rhode Island's children. As this system takes shape, **it is critical that we strengthen, not disrupt, this momentum.** H7994 would help the state take an important step by reaffirming the central role of the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) in leading and overseeing the children's behavioral health system. Maintaining strong leadership and accountability within DCYF is essential to ensuring continuity, compliance with the consent decree, and a sustained focus on child-centered care.

MENTOR RI trains thousands of program staff and volunteer mentors on topics relating to youth mental health. Mentoring is a proven support for healthy youth development, and this is why DCYF makes sure all their social workers are familiar with the impact of mentoring and the elements of effective mentoring practices.

We respectfully urge you to support **H7994** to reinforce DCYF's leadership role; and carefully reconsider any budget language that would shift authority away from DCYF during this critical implementation period. Rhode Island has an opportunity to build a system that truly works for children and families.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued commitment to Rhode Island's children and families.

Sincerely,

Jeanine Achin
CEO
MENTOR Rhode Island

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The RI Mentoring Partnership
is a 501(c)(3) Corporation

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