



March 30, 2026

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan
Chair, House Health and Human Services Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Written Testimony to Support - H7994

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and distinguished members of the Committee,

My name is Michelle Loranger, and I submit this written testimony as the Executive Director of Day One in support of **H7994**.

Day One is honored to serve as the four Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) in Rhode Island—Kent, Newport, Providence, and Washington Counties—as well as the Rhode Island Children's Network, the state chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers. The CAC model is the national best-practice response to child sexual abuse, child exploitation, and witness to violence. Through this work, we witness firsthand the specialized care children need, including comprehensive, wraparound services that are trauma-informed and actively involve families as partners in healing. DCYF is an essential partner in our shared efforts to promote the wellbeing of children.

H7994 represents an important step in reaffirming the central role of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) in leading and overseeing Rhode Island's children's behavioral health system. Strong leadership and clear accountability within DCYF are essential to ensuring continuity of care, regulatory compliance, and a sustained focus on child-centered services. DCYF is uniquely positioned to provide holistic and comprehensive behavioral health care for children and youth, as it considers the full range of factors that affect well-being, including social determinants of health, family systems, demographic influences, and mental health diagnoses.

Further consolidating behavioral health authority under the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH) risks undermining the progress DCYF has already made while weakening continuity and oversight at a critical time. Such a shift could disrupt a system that is still being implemented and evaluated. I have seen firsthand how multi-agency involvement can lead to fragmented care, role confusion, and disputes over service responsibilities—ultimately to the detriment of children and families.

With the appropriate resources and funding directed to DCYF to support critically important continuity of care, Rhode Island can build a behavioral health system that truly works for children and families.

We are confident that H7994 will help move the state toward that goal.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Loranger".

Michelle Loranger, MPA
Executive Director