



Office of the Child Advocate

State of Rhode Island

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

April 7, 2026

Thank you, Chairman DiPalma and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of House Bill 7127, Article 5, Sections 5 and 6 which will replace the current exemption for dependents with a refundable Child Tax Credit (CTC) for dependents age 18 and under.

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.

Data and research show that poverty, unstable housing, substance use, and intergenerational trauma are known to be key risk factors for child maltreatment. Families experiencing very limited economic resources increases the likelihood of child maltreatment when caregivers are unable to meet appropriate basic safety, supervisory, and medical needs. Economic strain on caregivers can increase caregiver stress, mental health struggles, and can lead to harmful parenting practices. In Rhode Island, children of color are more likely to enter the child welfare system and families of color are overrepresented among low-income families. The 2025 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook reported “In Rhode Island between 2019 and 2023, Black and Hispanic children were about 12 and eight times more likely, respectively, to live in high-poverty neighborhoods than non-Hispanic white children.”

Research demonstrates that programs and initiatives aimed to reduce poverty can serve as a counterweight to risks of child maltreatment. Additionally, tax credits have been shown to be an effective prevention strategy to reduce the risk of child maltreatment, prevent entry into the child welfare system, and improve overall child and family well-being. The Child Tax Credit & Family Economic Security Findings from the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Survey of Families with children reported that the CTC helped families by promoting “the healthy growth and development of children and families. This was particularly true for Black families and families with lower incomes, who benefited significantly from the credit, and were more likely to need support meeting basic needs due to chronic disinvestment and the role systemic racism has played in shaping supports and systems.”

The OCA supports Sections 5 and 6 of Article 5 in the Governor’s recommended budget to replace the current exemption for dependents with a refundable CTC for dependents age 18 and under and urges the support of the Committee. Thank you for your continued support of children and families impacted by poverty in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Katelyn Medeiros".

Katelyn Medeiros, Esq.
Child Advocate