



April 7, 2026

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: In support of HJR7127 – Office of the Child Advocate Budget

On behalf of the Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, I write in support of the proposed FY2027 budget for the Rhode Island Office of the Child Advocate (OCA).

The Office of the Child Advocate plays a vital role in Rhode Island's system of accountability for children and youth, particularly those involved with the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) and other state systems of care. As an independent oversight body, the OCA helps ensure that vulnerable children receive appropriate services and that agencies remain responsive to their needs.

This oversight is especially important at a time when Rhode Island is implementing significant changes to its health and human services systems, including the state's ongoing Medicaid transformation efforts. As financing and service delivery structures evolve, it is critical that there remain strong, independent safeguards to ensure that reforms do not inadvertently disrupt services for children and families. The Child Advocate provides an essential lens on how policy changes affect children in real time, helping identify potential gaps, elevate concerns from families and providers, and ensure that the needs of youth remain central to system reforms.

In addition, Rhode Island continues to implement major reforms associated with the state's children's behavioral health consent decree. Independent oversight and transparency are key components of this work. The OCA's ability to review cases, identify systemic challenges, and advocate for improvements helps ensure that the commitments the state has made to children and families are fully realized.

Maintaining strong support for the Office of the Child Advocate is an important investment in accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement across Rhode Island's child-serving systems. The Coalition strongly supports sustaining the resources necessary for the office to carry out its statutory responsibilities on behalf of the state's most vulnerable children.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Rhode Island's children and for your consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tanja Kubas-Meyer".

Tanja Kubas-Meyer
Executive Director