



The Honorable Lou DiPalma, Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
State House  
Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: S2841

May 4, 2026

Dear Chairman DiPalma and members of the Committee:

I am writing this letter in support of Senate bill 2841 which would mandate DCYF protection of benefits owed to foster children by providing regular benefits screening, completing applications, and conserving benefits while assisting foster youth into adulthood. The bill will also provide financial literacy training and support as well as annual reports to the general assembly and concerned parties. Given the abundance of evidence of how challenging it is for foster youth when they exit the foster care system, Rhode Island should stop justifying the practice of taking the money away from the children.

Adoption Rhode Island has worked with thousands of children and youth with foster care experience over the years. We believe that foster youth should **benefit** from **their** benefits. Foster youth have no obligation to pay for their own care. Child protection agencies do. Maximizing a mix of federal resources to fund our child protection system is critical to building and supporting a strong system. Claiming children's benefits should not be part of the mix of funding sources.

Disabled foster youth and those who have lost a parent constitute some of our nation's most vulnerable children. Some foster children are eligible for or receiving Social Security disability, survivor, or other benefits, which can amount to over \$900 per month. Federal law requires these benefits be used in the child's best interest for unmet needs. For this subset of foster youth who face tremendous obstacles when they leave care, these assets can serve as a lifeline to cover housing, food, health care, and transportation. Unfortunately, many foster youth beneficiaries will never receive their money, or even know that the state has applied for their benefits.

Youth who age out of foster care frequently face severe challenges including a significant risk of homelessness. Many struggle with obtaining employment, earning a degree, poor mental health, lack of credit and more. These young people often have few, if any family support to provide them with a safety net.

By supporting this legislation, youth eligible for benefits could use them to help with housing, education, and other daily needs as they transition into adulthood. This could greatly impact their ability to remain housed and attend school. In Rhode Island, approximately 1.2 million dollars of benefits are claimed and

retained by the state. That is a small portion of the DCYF budget but could be a life changer for foster youth.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darlene Allen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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