



## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

May 9, 2024

Thank you, Chair McNamara, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 8190 which would establish the Attendance for Success Act. This act would focus on student attendance in schools, with a special emphasis on chronically absent students, mandate requirements for attendance policies, and provide for multiple plans, reporting requirements and supports to address student absenteeism from school.

My name is Katelyn Medeiros, and I am the Acting Child Advocate for the State of Rhode Island. I am the Acting Director of the agency which serves as the oversight to the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). As part of our role as the oversight agency, we monitor the case of each child and young adult open to DCYF 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.

Nationally, children and youth in foster care experience instability in both living and school environments. As a result, students in foster care are at higher risk than their peers of low academic achievement, grade retention, and lower graduation rates. According to the 2024 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook, students in foster care had four-year graduation rate of 51% compared to 84% of all students.

Educational achievement is a powerful counterweight to the trauma, separation, abuse, neglect, and instability experienced by children and youth involved in the child welfare system. Regular attendance in school is an important part of ensuring academic growth and success of all students, particularly those in out-of-home placement. Bills like H8190 will directly address barriers to academic success and support critical opportunities for some of our most vulnerable students to achieve educational stability and improve academic outcomes. We have a collective responsibility to provide comprehensive educational tools to ensure educational success for students in foster care.

My office supports passage of House Bill 8190 and is willing to work with Rhode Island Department of Education and DCYF to ensure the educational stability and success of students involved in the child welfare system in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katelyn Medeiros".

Katelyn Medeiros, Esq.  
Acting Child Advocate