



Rhode Island Department of Human Services
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Office of the Director
Kimberly Merolla-Brito

May 9, 2024

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: H 7031 – An Act Relating to Human Services – Certification of Childcare and Youth
Serving Workers and Operators**

Dear Chair Abney:

I am writing to share information regarding H 7031, a bill that would eliminate the expense of background checks for workers seeking employment at center and family child care providers licensed through the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS). I hope this information provides useful historical context to aid your decision making.

Since May 2021, all child care workers at DHS-licensed child care providers have been getting the cost for comprehensive background checks waived through the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office. This initiative was funded primarily through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), and will be sunsetting on June 30, 2024, which has been communicated with providers.

Waiving the cost of comprehensive background checks cost over \$225,000 in FY23, providing approximately 5,700 comprehensive background checks. This limited funding came as the child care sector continued to make steady progress towards the state's broader COVID recovery. Beginning in July, the process for background checks of child care workers will return to normal.

Importantly, the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) required comprehensive background checks for these workers beginning in 2015. Comprehensive background checks cost \$45 per applicant; and while local police have provided comprehensive background checks, the waiver was only available through the state Attorney General's Office.

If passed, there would be a need to identify a new funding source. It would also require coordination between state and local police departments to ensure only CCDF-specific background checks are being completed.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Merolla-Brito

Kimberly Merolla-Brito

Director

RI Department of Human Services

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance
The Honorable Mary Ann Shallcross Smith
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel for the Speaker of the House of Representatives
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy