



**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 7122 – An Act Relating to Human Services – The Rhode Island Works Program**

Dear Chair Abney:

I am writing in support of H 7122, which would eliminate a statutory requirement for single parents to cooperate with child support orders as a condition to receive essential child care. The proposed amendment to current statute would increase access to the Child Care Assistance Program for income-eligible, working, single parents who are often comprised of women, minorities, and individuals experiencing hardship.

Currently, Rhode Island is the only state in New England still enforcing this policy, which currently denies access to child care (and the related benefits of early learning), and thereby serving as a deterrent to meaningful employment. As such, passage of H7122 will help improve economic viability for eligible families, in accordance with the objectives of the RI Department of Human Services (DHS). While the current CCAP caseload remains far below pre-pandemic levels, this proposed amendment would help to realize a return of people seeking child care services covered through federal dollars.

Another important consideration in support of this bill is that it would streamline the process for approval helping families receive child care services more quickly. Families would receive support without the mandatory requirements slowing down their application. By amending this statute, DHS will be able to more quickly process CCAP applications, reach more working families, and support broader economic mobility for Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your consideration as you review 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 Grace Diaz

Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel for the Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy