May 9, 2024

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the House Committee on Finance,

I am writing in support of HB 7187, which would exempt any individual who is aging out of the state's foster care system, up to twenty-seven (27) years of age, from payment of the fee for driver's education classes at CCRI. I want to applaud Representative Casimiro for her commitment to the welfare and empowerment of the state's foster youth.

According to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, an average of 112 individuals age out of the foster care system each year. It is no secret that foster youth face unique challenges as they navigate through the transition to adulthood. Access to essential resources and opportunities, such as driver's education, can significantly impact their ability to achieve independence and success.

While Rhode Island General Law § 31-10-19 does not require individuals twenty-one (21) years of age or older to take driver's education in order to seek a driver's license, the college is able to accept individuals who would now be eligible under this legislation.

The college enjoys a collaborative relationship with DCYF in offering foster youth and those aging out of foster care up to age 21 driver's education at CCRI. Operationally, DCYF identifies those who are eligible and provides that information to the college. We are confident we can expand this relationship with DCYF to identify those ages 21 to 27 who would be eligible under this legislation to provide driver's education.

Again, I want to thank Representative Casimiro for her dedication to the well-being of Rhode Island's foster youth. I am confident this legislation will make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless individuals and contribute to building a more just and equitable society.

Sincerely,

Rosemary A. Costigan, Ph.D., RN
Interim President