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ACLU OF RI POSITION: AMEND

TESTIMONY ON 24-H 7371, AN ACT RELATING TO COURTS – FAMILY COURT April 4, 2024

This bill would allow juvenile hearing boards to refer offenders to a rehabilitative driving course. It would further allow the boards to require juveniles to pay “reasonable tuition” for the course. We would urge that this latter provision be amended. Specifically, we would ask that any charging of tuition be allowed only after a determination of the family’s ability to pay such a fee is made.

Juvenile hearing boards should be designed to level the playing field. But if a juvenile ends up unable to meet the requirements imposed on them by the board – or ends up being unable to accept the conditions imposed by the board to dispose of a charge – solely because of financial obstacles, the board’s role as an alternative to the harshness of the judicial system will be thwarted.

We therefore urge that the bill be amended to provide for the waiving of any tuition fees if the juvenile and their family are not in a position to afford them.

Thank you for considering our views.