



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

April 4, 2024

Thank you, Chairperson Craven and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of House Bill 7802 which will allow a minor, between age fourteen and age seventeen, who does not have a permanent residence or is in the custody of the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) to receive a state identification card without a signature from a parent, guardian or foster parent at no cost as well as a certified copy of the minor's birth certificate.

My name is Katelyn Medeiros, and I am the Acting Child Advocate for the State of Rhode Island. I am the Director of the agency which serves as the oversight agency to DCYF. As the oversight agency, we monitor the case of each child and young adult open to the Department 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. When concerns about a specific out-of-home placement are brought to the attention of the OCA, our staff determine the type of advocacy that may be needed and take appropriate steps to protect the child's safety and overall well-being.

Fees for documentation are a barrier to young people experiencing homelessness or do not have a permanent address and may need to access invaluable services and supports. State identification is a prerequisite for accessing a variety of basic needs including but not limited to, enrolling in school, opening a bank account, receiving critical community services and resources, accessing healthcare, and applying for employment. House Bill 7802 will remove the barrier of cost to access a state identification card, thereby enabling young people to navigate various systems requiring identification.

The OCA supports House Bill 7802 removing the cost barrier for some of our most vulnerable youth to access a state identification card, opening doors to numerous resources that may otherwise be inaccessible. We thank you for your continued support of our most vulnerable children and youth in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Katelyn Medeiros". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katelyn Medeiros, Esq.
Acting Child Advocate