



April 01, 2025

To: The Honorable Representative Robert Craven, Sr.  
Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee  
House Lounge  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: HB5260

From:  
Youth Transition Senior Caseworker; Tides Family Services

As the Youth Transition Senior Caseworker Of Tides Family Services, I respectfully submit the following testimony in support of Rhode Island Senate Bill H5260 for Voluntary Extension of Care Funding for youth involved with the Juvenile Justice System prior to their eighteenth birthday.

At Tides Family Services, we work with some of the most vulnerable youth in our state—those involved in child welfare, juvenile justice, and children’s behavioral health systems. Part of my role at Tides is to oversee our Youth Transition Center program (YTC). YTC is a unique collaboration between Tides Family Services, the Department of Children, Youth and Families (“DCYF”) and the Rhode Island Training School (“RITS”) for male and female youth, aged 13 to 19 living in Providence, Pawtucket, Woonsocket, and the surrounding communities. YTC helps youth to prepare for release from the RITS or meet the conditions of their probation. It emphasizes responsibility and prevention strategies to avoid re-entry into the Juvenile Justice system.

During my time at Tides working at YTC and other home based clinical services(outreaching tracking and preserving family network), I have seen a lot of transitional aged youth reach adulthood without appropriate support which has increased the likelihood of reoffending. We work hard prior to each youth turning 18 to help them access any needed resources, including but not limited to identification, education, employment, housing, and other basic needs to be successful in adulthood. A lot of our youth we work with have had lack of adequate support for successful reintegration into society which causes more harm because it mostly and reintegrating into their communities can be difficult, leading to them feeling isolated which makes them return to old patterns of behaviors. Also, persistence of underlying issues like mental health problems play a major role. Many families who work with in the system have underlying mental health conditions that are not adequately addressed, which mostly increases the risk of reoffending. This legislation would mean that youth in these situations would have options for being able to extend their time with formal support in order to access resources, develop additional skills, and set their lives up for success away from formal systems. In my opinion, this would significantly decrease recidivism and help prevent involvement in the adult juvenile justice system. That is why I am imploring you to support H5260. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

[William Baah](#)

Tides Family Services  
215 Washington St  
West Warwick, RI 02893



Additional language:

On behalf of Tides Family Services, I am writing in strong support of H5260. This legislation amends Rhode Island General Law 14-1-6 and would extend the Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC) Program to children who are wayward and delinquent and in the juvenile justice system; and children who attain reunification prior to their 18th birthday, however the reunification is not successful. This significantly expands those youth eligible for the Voluntary Extension of Care Program. Currently youth who are adjudicated wayward or delinquent, that is, most likely involved in the juvenile justice system are not eligible for participation in the Voluntary Extension of Care. Also, currently those youth who are not in foster care prior to their 18th birthday and possibly reunified are not eligible to elect participation in the Voluntary Extension of Care Program. Currently, any young adult who was in DCYF care on their 18th birthday is eligible for the VEC program until they reach age 21. This includes any youth who may have left DCYF care and now wishes to return. However, the current law excludes youth in the juvenile justice system and those who were reunified and not in care of the Department.

The DCYF VEC program's goal is to support young people in becoming self-sufficient, independent, and thriving adults. The program is youth-driven where the young adult, with the assistance of a social worker, works on setting their own goals for housing, education, employment, emotional support systems, and future success. DCYF provides financial assistance for housing as well as money to help with the youth's personal needs throughout their participation in this program.

Through the VEC Program, young adults receive guidance and assistance with developing and implementing a transition plan; Identifying, securing, and maintaining an appropriate supervised living arrangement (SLA); the receipt of cash assistance for help with rental costs and assistance with daily living expenses; accessing other supportive services for which the young adult might be eligible such as SNAP, cash assistance, heating assistance, WIC, Child Care Assistance Program, and more. The VEC program staff work with young adults to identify educational needs and goals. Supports may include educational planning, applying for college financial aid, accessing on-campus programs, and identifying potential internship opportunities, and more. The Vec program staff assist in developing and supporting a career plan based on the young adult's choices including referrals for vocational/ career assessment, connections to workforce training programs, and employment opportunities. In addition, the VEC program staff assist the young adults to navigate use of health coverage to access needed medical and behavioral healthcare support. This is tremendous assistance for young adults turning the age of 18 and in need of this type of assistance.

According to the DCYF Strategic Metrics Dashboard dated March 21, 2025 which is provided by DCYF to Providers, there are currently 95 youth participating in the Voluntary Extension of Care program under the current eligibility guidelines. The DCYF data indicates that there are currently 226 youth in juvenile probation and 35 youth at the Rhode Island Training School. By expanding eligibility for VEC to the juvenile justice population there are potentially over 200 additional youth who now would be eligible for significant additional assistance in navigating everyday life as well as additional cash assistance in certain areas.

This additional over 200 youth does not include those youth who were reunified prior to turning 18 where that reunification disrupted. This means even more youth eligible for VEC.

We urge you to support this legislation which would expand eligibility for young adults so that they would be entitled to the very valuable programming and support the VEC program provides for young adults.

Thank you for your time and consideration.