

**Testimony Re: H-5298, An Act Relating to Delinquent and Dependent
Children – Proceedings in Family Court
House Judiciary Committee**

April 1, 2025

Greetings Chairperson Craven,

I am in strong support of this common sense legislation H 5298. While a RI Senator, I sponsored the senate version of this legislation in 2021 and 2022. During that time I did an informal “survey” on whether the public knew there was no law in place specifying that a juvenile suspected or accused of a crime was assured the presence of a parent, guardian or lawyer while being interrogated. Of the dozens of people I asked, every one of them believed the law required one of the above mentioned people to be present when a juvenile was being interrogated.

My survey was not scientific, nor can the results be used in proving how important it is for juveniles to have an adult present when being questioned. It does show that people believe that someone whose brain has not fully developed (which IS backed by science), have the right to an adult present when interrogated after being accused of a crime.

Studies show that people under the age of 18 are more likely to give false confessions when under the stress of interrogation, reducing the possibilities of correctly solving crimes. Having a parent, guardian or lawyer present provides support and guidance for a juvenile in these stressful situations.

Lastly, the fact that people under the age of 18 do get this protection while on school property R.I.G.L 16-21.5-1, but not anywhere else seems to be providing inconsistent protection and rights for Rhode Island youth. With civil liberties being challenged daily, passing this legislation is an easy way to protect all juveniles no matter where they are being interrogated for a suspected crime, their due process.

Respectfully,
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