



TIDES FAMILY SERVICES

WE NEVER GIVE UP ON A KID... NEVER!

215 Washington St.
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Tidesfs.org

April 1, 2025

The Honorable Representative Robert Craven, Sr.

Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee Members

House Lounge

State House

Providence, RI 02903

RE: HB5345

Dear Chairman Robert Craven, Sr. and members of the committee,

On behalf of Tides Family Services, I am writing in strong support of **H5345**. This legislation amends 14-1-6 to extend the voluntary extension of care (VEC) program to those children who are wayward and delinquent and in the juvenile justice system, and any child in the custody of the state, and extends the Voluntary Extension of Care to a youth's 26 birthday. This legislation extends the youth's opportunity to participate in the Voluntary Extension of Care from age 21 to age 26.

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



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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. By expanding eligibility for young adults until age 26, there would be many more young adults eligible to receive the important support that the VEC program offers.

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.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth A. Bixby, LICSW
Chief Executive Officer