



TIDES FAMILY SERVICES

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

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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: HB5347

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

On behalf of Tides Family Services, I am writing in strong support of H5347. This legislation amends RI General Law 42-72-5 to state that the public policy of the state is that DCYF treat children in foster care the same as foster children who have been adopted or placed in guardianship for all purposes including eligibility for all programs offered, and any extensions of jurisdiction including the Voluntary Extension of Care, any aftercare programs and any educational and health benefits.

Tides understands and works with DCYF, as DCYF works to create permanency for children in their care. If reunification with birth parents does not work, DCYF will pursue adoption for the child or legal guardianship. Tides Family Services provides many services to assist children and families as they work toward a permanency option.

In a recent public procurement for adoption and guardianship services, DCYF provided the following data:

- In FY23, 180 children were discharged from care to adoption.
- In FY23, 190 children were discharged from care to guardianship.

This provides a sense of the number of youth currently not eligible for services such as VEC, for example.



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H 5347 emphasizes that the public policy of this state is to ensure that all children in foster care, including those who have achieved permanency through either adoption or guardianship, are entitled to all the same services as foster children in care. This would include, but not be limited to, the Voluntary Extension of Care, and all aftercare programs, educational grants, and all benefits, especially for young adults. In essence, this would increase eligibility for children and young adults to all DCYF services. Through Tides' work, especially with the young adult population, we know the need to expand these services to provide as many services as possible for all youth who have been in the care and custody of the Department.

We urge you to support H 5347, which would ensure that all children in DCYF's care and custody have the same access to important services, especially as young adults.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth A. Bixby, LICSW

Chief Executive Officer