



# Children's FRIEND

Making a difference...  
one child at a time.



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March 23, 2022

Chairman Marvin Abney  
House Finance Committee  
RI State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in support of Governor's FY 2023, FY 2022 Budgets vis-à-vis DCYF: Advocating for rate increases for DCYF contracted services

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

Our testimony today concerns the **Governor's FY2023 proposed budget and the FY2022 supplemental related to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF): While we support the governor's proposed budget, Children's Friend strongly advocates for rate increases for DCYF contracted services.** The support that is available through providers is vital to the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's most vulnerable children and their families. Providers received stimulus funding to support our programs through June 30, 2022, but there is no increase in the FY 2023 budget. Such an increase is necessary in order to stabilize community-based contracted providers; without a rate increase, the contracted community-based system will be in danger of collapse due to an inability to recruit and retain qualified staff.

Our agency got its start in 1834 as a safe and caring space for orphaned children, and we build on that legacy today through our Foster Care, Adoption Support, and Project Connect Services. Each of these contracted programs are essential for ensuring safe, loving homes for the most vulnerable children in Rhode Island. However, Rhode Island's child welfare system is in crisis. While the use of ARPA funds to stem the statewide staffing crisis is critical, it is imperative that the State recognize that the current crises have been precipitated by decades of disinvestment. **Reimbursement rates must increase permanently and sustainably.** Rates that do not cover the costs of quality care mean that providers are unable to attract and retain talented staff.

As we stabilize this critical work force, we must modernize our child welfare system to support happy, healthy, and safe children and their families. **Children's Friend is in support of the \$28 million in FY2022-FY2024 to replace the child welfare information system, RICHIST,** in order to make the best data-informed decisions to improve practices across the state. **Children's Friend also supports the \$1.5 million in ARPA funding (and the additional \$375,000 in FY2024) for lead abatement and fire safety upgrades in foster homes** in order to reduce negative outcomes for children placed in foster homes. We support DCYF initiatives related to placing more children in family settings and foster care, and thus, must support initiatives related to increasing foster home safety. While these provisions are critical, they do not go far enough – providers must see rate increases to ensure access to high quality services for the long term.

Thank you for your time and review of this testimony, and for your continued efforts to supports the children who are the future of our State. If you have any further questions or need any additional information, please contact me at [dcaprio@cfsri.org](mailto:dcaprio@cfsri.org).

Sincerely,

David Caprio

President and CEO