



Children's FRIEND

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



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March 30, 2023

Chairman Ryan Pearson
Senate Finance Committee
RI State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony regarding the Governor's FY2024 Budget vis a vis DCYF

Dear Chairman Pearson and members of the committee,

My testimony today concerns the Governor's FY2024 proposed budget related to the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). **Children's Friend supports the Governor's proposed budget which includes \$3.3 million in General Revenue for placement and community provider rate increases and strongly advocates for further rate increases for DCYF contracted services.**

As the state's oldest child-serving agency, Children's Friend has a rich 190-year history of caring for vulnerable young children in Rhode Island. As an organization that is nationally recognized for high quality programs, Children's Friend provides a full-service array of programs to over 20,000 young children and families annually, providing over 20 distinct programs geared to prevention and early interventions. The work of the foster care system – recruitment, development/training, guidance through the licensing process, placement and care coordination, completion of Home Studies, and support for both resources and birth families – is not only part of our mission-driven work, but also an integral part of our rich history.

Rhode Island's child welfare system is in crisis. While the use of ARPA funds was helpful to stem the statewide staffing crisis, the crisis is not over. It is imperative that the state recognize that the current crises have been precipitated by decades of disinvestment in the child welfare system. Reimbursement rates must be increased in a permanent and sustainable way. Rates that do not cover the cost of quality care mean that providers are unable to attract and retain talented staff.

While we fully support the additional \$3.3 million in increased rates for new provider contracts, we do want to highlight for the Senate that as of today, no RFP's have been released for the provider contracts which renew on July 1, 2023. If extensions of existing contracts will be utilized by DCYF as of July 1, 2023, it is necessary that these contract extensions include increased rates. Failure to do so will result in further destabilizing the system of care for our most vulnerable children.

Thank you for your time and review of this testimony, and for your continued efforts to support the children who are the future of our state. If you have further questions or need any additional information, please contact me at dcaprio@cfsri.org.

Sincerely,

David Caprio
President and CEO