



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

H7171 – GOVERNOR’S FY2021 BUDGET - ARTICLE 4, SECTION 3

February 5, 2020

Thank you, Chairman Abney and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 7171 Governor’s FY 2021 Budget Article 4, Section 3 – DCYF Child Welfare Information System Replacement.

My name is Jennifer Griffith and I am the Child Advocate for the State of Rhode Island. I am the Director of the agency which serves as the oversight to DCYF. As part of our role as the oversight agency, we monitor the case of each child and young adult open to the Department to protect their legal rights and to promote policies and practices which ensure that youth are safe, and that their physical, mental, medical, educational, emotional, and behavioral health needs are met.

The Rhode Island Child Welfare Information System (RICHIST) is more than twenty-two years old and is significantly outdated. I have expressed concerns about the limitations and overall functionality of the RICHIST system during House Committee on Oversight Hearings with the hope that the system would be updated to accommodate technological advancement for case management and data collection. Despite DCYF’s attempts to update the RICHIST system, it continues to be cumbersome to navigate and inefficient. Additional cutting-edge reporting and analytics functions are needed to adequately monitor children involved in our child welfare system. RICHIST is currently unable to meet additional data tracking needs including tracking data specific to young people participating in the Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC) Program which is currently tracked manually in an Excel spreadsheet.

Ensuring DCYF has access to a comprehensive, efficient, and innovative data system is vital to ensuring we can track critical data elements to measure outcomes of some of our most vulnerable children and families.

My office supports Budget Article 4, Section 3 to take a proactive, thoughtful, and comprehensive approach to replacing RICHIST with a more technologically advanced, accurate, and efficient system to support the safety and stability of children and youth involved in the child welfare system in Rhode Island.

Respectfully,



Jennifer Griffith, Esq.

Child Advocate