



**RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT**

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**Testimony Re: House Bill 5811, An Act Relating to Medical Assistance and Public Assistance Caseload Estimating Conferences**  
**House Finance Committee**

**May 13, 2021**

**Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today. We would also like to thank Representative Tanzi for sponsoring this important bill and Representatives Kislak, Cassar, Speakman, Alzate, Felix, Henries, Morales, Slater, and Fogarty for co-sponsoring. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for the intent of House Bill 5811, which would expand the medical assistance and public assistance caseload estimating conferences to include the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF).

In 1991, the General Assembly created a Medical Assistance and Public Assistance Caseload Estimating Conference that was similar to the Revenue Estimating Conference but focused on adopting caseload estimates for public assistance programs. Historically, these programs have included four programs – the Rhode Island Works cash assistance program, the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), Supplemental Security Income, and General Public Assistance.

As you know, the Governor generally uses the estimates that come out of the November Caseload Estimating Conference to develop her or his budget, and the General Assembly uses the estimates from the May Caseload Estimating Conference to develop its own budget. This process provides transparency (hearings open to the public and reports posted on the General Assembly's website), accurate forecasting (done semi-annually), and consensus (includes both the Governor and the General Assembly).

With regard to DCYF, in the past, there have been issues with supplemental budget requests being necessary when there have been increases in the number of investigations and individual cases of child neglect and abuse, some of which have resulted in caseloads that exceed the recommended best practice standard, particularly for front-line DCYF staff. We agree that including DCYF in the Caseload Estimating Conferences would ensure relevant caseload information and expenditures would be considered during the development of the Executive Budget in order to ensure adequate funding for DCYF to address the critical needs of children and families in crisis.

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We urge the committee to consider that successful implementation would require DCYF to have adequate personnel and systems in place to provide comprehensive information to the Caseload Estimating Conferences.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports passage of this legislation as it relates to the child welfare part of DCYF, and we thank you for your leadership on this critical issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony today.