



Testimony Re: FY 2019 Budget: Office of the Child Advocate
Senate Finance Committee
April 12, 2018
Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its strong support to increase the maximum staffing capacity in the FY2019 budget for the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA).

We applaud the extensive work of the small team in the Child Advocate's Office and we would like to respectfully request an increase of the staffing capacity from 8.6 FTE to 10.0 FTE to support their additional responsibilities, particularly in light of the added responsibility to act as the Federal Monitor for the Children's Rights Lawsuit and their ongoing work to review child fatalities and near fatalities. We continue to be very concerned about the findings documented in the OCA's Child Fatality Review Panel reports and the Blackstone Valley Youth and Family Collaborative report. We think it is in the best interest of children and families that the OCA be able to increase its FTE capacity to 10 FTE's in order to have enough staff to do the Child Death Reviews and site reviews more quickly. Please note that this would not require additional state funding because OCA would apply for funding (OCA intends to apply for and accept grant funding) to support this additional 1.4 FTE to carry out the office's expanded responsibilities.

Given the critical role the Office of the Child Advocate plays in protecting our state's children by being a check and balance for the Department of Children, Youth & Families, it is important that the agency have adequate resources to effectively protect our most vulnerable children and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

