



**Testimony Re: House Bill 8099 An Act Relating to Motor and Other Vehicles
-- State Identification Cards for Minors Without Residence Act**

House Judiciary Committee

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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for House Bill 8099. We would like to thank Representative Newberry for sponsoring this important bill. This bill would allow a minor between the ages of 14-17 who does not have a permanent residence or is in the custody of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to receive a state identification card without a signature from a parent, guardian or foster parent at no cost, as well as a certified copy of their birth certificate.

Obtaining identification is a vital resource for youth experiencing homelessness, and youth in foster care. A government-issued identification card or driver's license is needed in order to apply for housing, to open a bank account, enroll in school, get a job or receive public assistance. Youth experiencing homelessness or are in the custody of DCYF who cannot access vital identification records are limited in their ability to become self-sufficient. Additionally, a government-issued identification card is needed to obtain a copy of a birth certificate which youth without a permanent residence often lack.

Ironically, the very documentation they need in order to access supports, education, and employment to gain agency and independence is the barrier. For each vital document a youth pursues, including state identification, birth certificates, etc., other vital identification documents are required to prove identity and residency. For many youth experiencing homelessness or youth who have experienced multiple placements, these items are not accessible. Youth who are not connected to family often do not have ready access to many of these documents and find it difficult to come to a place where they can obtain one document that will help them in getting the others.

Moreover, fees for documentation introduce an additional and unnecessary barrier to young people who are experiencing homelessness or who do not have a permanent address.

House Bill 8099 seeks to address these issues, ensuring that minors who do not have a permanent residence or are in the custody of DCYF can access documents needed for education, employment, and a successful transition to adulthood. Many states across the political spectrum have already adopted these commonsense, low-cost reforms. We urge passage. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.