WHEREAS, The children and adolescents in the care of DCYF are entitled to the protection and care of the state; and
WHEREAS, The children and adolescents in DCYF consistently experience an elementary or secondary education that is markedly turbulent and intermittent; and
WHEREAS, The children and adolescents in DCYF care are entitled to a safe and permanent placement that is conducive to meeting their emotional, academic, and medical needs; and
WHEREAS, There is a contemporary concern regarding abuse and neglect in foster homes, group homes, and treatment facilities; and
WHEREAS, The indelible imprint of abuse and neglect upon any child or adolescent is intolerable; and
WHEREAS, The Children’s Bill of Rights (RIGL § 42-72-15), the United States Constitution, and the Constitution of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations must be upheld, and children and adolescents in DCYF care must be apprised of their rights in order to recognize abuse and/or neglect that may otherwise go undiscovered; and
WHEREAS, The constitutional right to acquire an attorney is often necessary in navigating legal labyrinths, and children and adolescents are no exception; and
WHEREAS, DCYF social workers are overburdened with an inappropriately excessive amount of cases; and
WHEREAS, The Office of the Child Advocate has consistently found that children and adolescents in DCYF care are subjected to a disproportionate amount of incidents involving abuse and neglect; and

WHEREAS, Nearly two decades ago, the Rhode Island House of Representatives demanded an end to night-to-night placement, yet it is still being practiced; and

WHEREAS, Legislative oversight and federal court action has failed to ameliorate the troubled condition of DCYF; and

WHEREAS, It is the steadfast opinion of this House that any form of abuse or neglect is wholly intolerable, especially at the hands of those who receive taxpayer funds to provide care and support for this distinct population of Rhode Islanders; and

WHEREAS, Action must be taken to bring an end to abuse and neglect; now, therefore

be it

RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations hereby declares that abuse and neglect is unconstitutional and inhumane, especially when inflicted upon children and adolescents already in DCYF care, thus a thorough review of the policies and procedures of DCYF is necessary; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a House emergency oversight commission on DCYF be created consisting of nine (9) members: nine (9) of whom shall be members of the Rhode Island House of Representatives, not more than five (5) from the same political party, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House.

The purpose of said commission shall be to investigate any unconstitutional or unethical activities, policies, procedures, or placements that pose an imminent threat of harm and danger to any child or adolescent currently or previously in DCYF care, including those youth in placements that are administered under the auspices of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC).

In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a permanent advisory commission, a legislative study commission, or any commission created by a General Assembly resolution, the appointing authority may appoint a member of the general public to serve in lieu of a legislator, provided that the Majority Leader or the Minority Leader of the political party which is entitled to the appointment, consents to the member of the general public.

Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at the call of the Speaker of the House and organize and shall select a chairperson.

Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.

All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,
documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or
desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

The Speaker of the House is hereby authorized and directed to provide suitable quarters
for said commission; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the
House of Representatives no later than January 7, 2021, and said commission shall expire on
March 7, 2021.
This resolution would create a nine (9) member special legislative emergency oversight commission on the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, and who would report back to the House no later than January 7, 2021, and whose life would expire on March 7, 2021.

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