VERMONT

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Agency of Human Services

To: The House Committee on Human Services

From: Aryka Radke, Deputy Commissioner, Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division (DCF-FSD)

Date: February 27, 2026

Subject: H. 657, DCF-FSD Extended Care

Thank you for the opportunity to testify to such an important topic, impacting the youth that our Division and the Committee mutually serve. The Family Services Division would like to clarify the differences between "aftercare" and "extended care" as they relate to H. 657, to support the Committee's understanding.

Aftercare

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) emphasizes the importance of family-based care for children in need. Aftercare is a critical component of this act, requiring that children placed in Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) receive aftercare services for at least six months post-discharge. Aftercare is intended to support the child's transition back to family care and ensure that family connections are maintained. The FFPSA aims to prevent the separation of children from their families and to provide high-quality residential treatment interventions that allow children to successfully return to family care.

Extended Care

Since 2007, the Vermont Youth in Transition Law has ensured the provision of Extended Care services for youth in or formerly in foster care. Extended Care Agreements (ECAs) outline supportive housing plans for youth ages 18-23 who have exited DCF custody. There are two types of Extended Care Agreements: DCF and the Youth Development Program (YDP). Both types of agreements are voluntary and do not involve the youth being in custody.

The Youth Development Program (YDP) is FSD's contracted transition and aftercare program for youth ages 14-23. YDP is partially funded with the federal Chafee grant. YDP serves approximately 450 current and former foster youth annually.

The federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 permitted child welfare agencies to access IV-E reimbursement for foster care placements for eligible youth up to age 21. Under this law, federal rules require court oversight of these cases. At this time, the Vermont Judiciary may not have capacity or explicit statutory jurisdiction for youth who voluntarily remain in foster care after age 18.

Additionally, Family Services Policy #160 outlines how concepts noted in this memo are applied in practice.

We are committed to keeping the Committee informed about these ongoing efforts and ensuring clarity in how these services are implemented. Thank you for your attention and dedication to this critical issue.