



For Immediate Release

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Contact: Joseph Smack

(302) 633-2605

Delaware Children in Foster Care Gain Important Rite of Passage

DOVER – Governor Ruth Ann Minner today signed legislation allowing children in foster care easier access to driver’s education and the privilege to earn a driver’s license. Sponsored by State Senator Liane Sorenson, Senate Bill 262 allows social workers to provide necessary signatures for youth in foster care who want to take driver’s education classes or apply for a license with the Division of Motor Vehicles. Prior to today, most children in care could not receive a driver’s license without the signature of a parent or other legal guardian who would assume the risk of liability for the student and state law and policies prohibited social workers from signing on the student’s behalf. This bill will eliminate liability on behalf of the social workers.

“I am proud to sign this bill,” Governor Minner said. “It provides an important step towards independence for children who don’t have strong family structures to assist them in life. It is also in our best interest that we reduce barriers to success wherever they exist.”

Senator Sorenson learned of the need of such a bill from foster youth Michele Robison, who expressed her frustration with not being allowed to take driver’s education and work towards earning her driver’s license while attending a summit for young ladies in the foster care system in the summer of 2006.

“It was difficult for me to be in a new school to begin with,” explained Robison. “Then I couldn’t take [driver’s education] like everyone else because my worker couldn’t sign for me. I hope that this will make it easier for foster kids because it is so important to learn to drive and get a license.”

On average, 60 children ‘age-out’ of the foster care system in Delaware every year. Many face the prospects of entering a workforce that oftentimes requires a driver’s license as a condition of employment.

“I’m glad Michele made me aware of how difficult it is for children in foster care to get a driver’s license,” Senator Sorenson said. “I knew I had to do something to assist and make sure these children have the same opportunities as their peers.”

The Division of Family Services and the Office of the Child Advocate have also been working with AIG Direct insurance to develop a low cost, portable auto insurance policy to cover this population—what could be the first of its kind policy in the nation.

“There is a real need to provide children in foster care with an opportunity to purchase affordable automobile insurance,” said AIG Direct Senior Vice President Steve Wardzinski, “This is one way that AIG can assist these children as they leave foster care and enter the real world.” The program will be underwritten by AIG Centennial Insurance Company.

Though insurance commissioner Matt Denn was instrumental in bringing AIG Direct to the table, the insurance program developed will not be funded by the state. However, a special donation fund has been established for anyone wishing to help offset the costs of the policies. Tax deductible donations can be made payable to: The Division of Family Services – AIG Strength to Be There for Children Fund, and can be sent to The Division of Family Services, 1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington DE, 19805.

Our Mission: The Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families provides leadership and advocacy for all of Delaware’s children, while endorsing a holistic approach to enable children to reach their fullest potential.

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