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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

RELATING TO DELINQUENT AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN -- PROCEEDINGS IN  
FAMILY COURT

Introduced By: Senators Mack, Acosta, Zurier, Gu, Ujifusa, Quezada, Euer, and  
Bissaillon

Date Introduced: March 14, 2025

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

- 1           SECTION 1. Chapter 14-1 of the General Laws entitled "Proceedings in Family Court" is  
2 hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:
- 3           **14-1-5.2. Expanded jurisdiction for special immigrant juvenile status findings.** (a)  
4 The family court shall have jurisdiction to make factual findings under this section to be used in  
5 conjunction with a petition to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services for  
6 designation of the minor child as having special immigrant juvenile status (herein this section  
7 referred to as “SIJS”) under 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(27)(J) including, but not limited to, determinations  
8 regarding the following:
- 9           (1) Whether the child has been declared dependent on the court, or legally placed under the  
10 custody of an individual or entity appointed by the court;
- 11           (2) Whether reunification with one or both parents is not viable due to abuse, neglect,  
12 abandonment, or a similar basis under state law; and
- 13           (3) Whether it is not in the best interest of the child to be returned to the child’s country of  
14 nationality or last habitual residence.
- 15           (b) For purposes of this section, the term “child” shall include any unmarried person under  
16 twenty-one (21) years of age who files a petition for relief under this section.
- 17           (c) The family court shall have continuing jurisdiction to make the findings set forth in  
18 subsection (a) of this section for any petitioner who is under the age of twenty-one (21) at the time

1 of filing, regardless of whether they have reached the age of eighteen (18) before the court issues  
2 its findings.

3 (d) A petition for factual findings under this section may be filed as an independent action  
4 or in conjunction with any other proceeding over which the family court has jurisdiction including,  
5 but not limited to, guardianship, child custody, adoption, and dependency matters.

6 (e) The court's jurisdiction to issue findings under this section shall be solely for the  
7 purposes of making the necessary factual determinations to support a petition for SIJS and shall not  
8 confer any independent immigration status.

9 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO DELINQUENT AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN -- PROCEEDINGS IN  
FAMILY COURT

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- 1           This act would grant Rhode Island's family court jurisdiction to make findings for Special  
2 Immigrant Juvenile Status petitions, including determinations about dependency, parental  
3 reunification, and the child's best interest, for minors under twenty-one (21) years.  
4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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