



State of Connecticut
CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

October 27, 2023

Governor Ned Lamont
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Lamont:

We are writing to you to share our grave concerns regarding the tragic death of 2-year-old Liam Rivera, specifically the troubling details of the state's involvement in his case as detailed in the recent report issued by the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA).

Liam's death was, unquestionably, sad news for Connecticut. His case demands thorough scrutiny of the agencies and personnel who touched his life—in particular, though not limited to, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), which bore primary responsibility for keeping Liam out of harm's way.

We urge you to immediately convene a Blue Ribbon Panel that would not only review the state's interactions with Liam and his family, but also review the issues raised by the OCA report as well as its recommendations to improve our safety net for children, including:

- An automated and electronic notification process to attorneys and GALs for client-centered administrative meetings;
- Amending state law to provide for transitional reunification plans, establish parameters and notice requirements;
- Reviewing of agency workloads and workforce needs, and the impact of telework on case practice;

The Blue Ribbon Panel must include state legislators, representatives from DCF as well as the Judicial Branch, OCA, the Office of the Public Defenders, and leaders of relevant community providers which specialize in care of at-risk children.

It's critical that we start this work now. Addressing the systemic procedural problems in Liam's case, as detailed by the OCA report, will require significant collaboration between all stakeholders, and we believe conducting that work now will focus our time and attention on addressing these important issues as quickly and as effectively as possible.

To us, and many Connecticut residents, our state's most-recent failings in helping at-risk children are tragically clear, and we fear these cases, including the recent Short Term Assessment & Respite (STAR) home issue in Harwinton, are emblematic of government's intervention into the lives of vulnerable children who need our help.

This is a pivotal moment for Connecticut's reputation for how it takes care our most vulnerable children, and decisive action from your office would go a long way toward instilling confidence in a safety net that isn't performing at its best.

We look forward to speaking more with you about this subject, and the members of our caucuses stand ready to work with you to install sorely needed improvements.

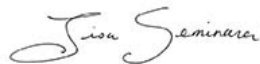
Sincerely,



Vincent Candelora
House Republican Leader



Kevin C. Kelly
Senate Republican Leader



Senator Lisa Seminara
Senate Ranking Member
Committee on Children



Representative Anne Dauphinais
House Ranking Member
Committee on Children