

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Free College Program for Adoption Rhode Island Youth**

**Past and present Adoption RI clients and their families can earn a degree or professional certificate completely online at no out-of-pocket cost**

The dream of a higher education for youth impacted by adoption and foster care is often less attainable than for most young people. Often, despite the desire to prepare for a better future and change the course of their lives, foster youth are met with challenges that outweigh opportunities.

Today, Adoption Rhode Island announces a partnership with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO and Rhode Island-based Student Resource Center to offer a variety of 6-month and 12-month professional certificates, as well as associate college degrees, that will enable adoption and foster youth and their families to enter a trade or specified business-level profession with the required qualifications.

The Free College Program offers a life-changing opportunity for qualified applicants to earn an associate degree or short-term certification so they can be prepared to enter the job market sooner. Certificates programs like *Medical Coding Specialist*, *Patient Health Navigator*, *Food and Beverage Management* are just a few available to help students get started. Additionally, these certificate credits can be applied toward an associate degree in the future, all at no cost\*. In addition, scholarships are available to purchase books, supplies, computers, and broadband access.

“For 41 years our organization has designed and delivered customized education and training programs that have built futures and improved the lives of more than 180,000 youth and working Rhode Islanders,” said Robert Delaney, Executive Director of the AFL-CIO’s Institute of Labor Studies and Research. “The ILSR has been a partner of the Student Resource Center since its inception and is proud to support this initiative, and that reflects the mission of the ILSR, to extend The Free College Program to youth impacted by adoption and foster care.

“Adoption Rhode Island is an agency that has been a long-time advocate for improving educational opportunities for youth in foster care,” said Darlene Allen, CEO, Adoption Rhode Island. “Among our aspirations is to empower young adults to have a successful future and achieve goals they may have thought unattainable. We

are excited to partner with the Student Resource Center in effort to help youth and families from foster care realize they can make a difference in the world.”

If you are or have ever been a client or participant in an Adoption Rhode Island program or service, or if you know someone who has, they and their families, may be eligible for this opportunity. Anyone interested should visit the Free College website at [AdoptionRI-FreeCollege.org](http://AdoptionRI-FreeCollege.org) for more information or to complete an application. You can also contact Alex DeRita ([aderita@adoptionri.org](mailto:aderita@adoptionri.org)) or Manuela Rosa at [mrosa@egcc.edu](mailto:mrosa@egcc.edu) to discuss this exciting opportunity.

***Adoption Rhode Island*** is a private nonprofit organization whose mission is to create safety, belonging and permanency for adopted and foster children, vulnerable youth, and families through compassionate services, advocacy, and education.

***The Student Resource Center*** offers a solution to ensure ALL are prepared for the future of work. We unite, engage and activate dynamic academic partners, enterprising labor unions. Like-minded employees, and social and economic justice organizations, to offer a path for motivated, working learners to obtain a free, online, quality college education. We meet our partners' students here they are and support them through every step of their education journey.

***The AFL-CIO*** is one of nearly 500 state and local labor councils of the AFL-CIO and are the heart of the labor movement. We are democratically elected bodies dedicated to represent the interests of working people at the state and local level. We mobilize our members and community partners to advocate for social and economic justice and we strive daily to vanquish oppression and make our communities better for all people—regardless of race, color, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, or ethnic or national origin.

\*The Free College benefit covers the cost of tuition, fees and books after any federal grants or other employer reimbursement is applied. The remaining amount will be cleared with the Free College Scholarship. The Free College Team will work with interested High School graduates/GED recipients to complete applications for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and apply any Pell grants or state grants to their tuition, ensuring, once approved, students will have no “out of pocket” costs for the “Free College” tuition, fees, or books, after any federal, state, or employer grants reimbursements are applied.