

April 24, 2025

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of H-5462

Dear Chairman Abney:

My name is Ana Cabrera, and I am the mother of a child with Autism. I am testifying in support of H-5462 / S-247, a bill that would allow children to remain in Early Intervention (EI) until the September after they turn 3 years-old. Currently, the Early Intervention system in Rhode Island only requires services until a child turns three, at which point they are immediately cut off. If children are still eligible for services, they are supposed to transition to their district's preschool special education program. However, finding an appropriate placement that meets the needs of these children is extremely difficult. As a result, many children miss out on valuable education and therapies, especially if they turn three after the school year has already begun.

This bill would:

- Give families the option to continue with their EI provider until the start of the school year after their child turns three;
- Ensure continuity of care for children receiving services;
- Provide adequate time for providers to make necessary arrangements to serve children past the age of three.

I support this bill because I was fortunate to start receiving EI services for my child when he was just 9 months old, before COVID-19, and before the current long waitlists and staffing shortages. EI has been incredibly helpful to my family and me. Without EI, I would have had to navigate everything on my own, and our lives would have looked very different. The support we received helped us tremendously, and we were able to prepare for my son's transition when he turned three. I cannot imagine what we would have done without EI.

It deeply concerns me to see so many parents and families unable to access EI services on time, preventing them from receiving full support. Even worse, many children experience a gap in services that causes them to regress.

I urge you to vote in favor of Bill H-5462 / S-247.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak in favor of S-247.

Ana Cabrera
a.cabreramunoz@hotmail.com
401-699-6589
11 Bank St., West Warwick, RI, 02893