

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 Leslie Turpen, and I am testifying in support of H-5462, a bill that would allow children to stay in Early Intervention until September after they turn three. The current Early Intervention system in RI is only required to serve children until they turn 3 and then they are immediately cut off. If children are still eligible for services, they are then supposed to be enrolled in their district's preschool special education program. Currently, finding a placement that meets the needs of these students is extremely difficult and children are losing out on valuable education and therapies, particularly when the child turns 3 after the school year is underway.

This bill would:

- Give families the choice of staying with their EI provider until the start of the school year after the child turns 3;
- Ensure continuity of care for children receiving services; and
- Provides adequate time for providers to ensure they are able to serve children past the age of 3.

I am in support of this bill as I am not only a physical therapist in our community, but as a mother of a child with special needs.

My daughter, Eva, is now five years old. She has global developmental delay, speech delay, and microcephaly. She received Early Intervention services until the age of three. Her birthday is in May, and like so many other families, we faced the gap in services head-on.

Anticipating this gap, we did everything we could to avoid a regression in her progress. We hustled to line up private therapies, physical, occupational, and speech, to cover the four months she would be left without EI support or school-based services. It was an incredibly difficult time. We lost time from work to attend and transport her to appointments. We dealt with long waitlists and limited scheduling options, all while juggling other responsibilities. And the financial burden was significant. These services came with copays, deductibles, and out of pocket expenses that many families simply cannot afford. This bill would help address exactly this kind of gap.

Early Intervention is a lifeline for many families. It lays the foundation for growth, learning, and independence. Ending those services abruptly, based on an arbitrary date, disrupts that foundation, and children like Eva are the ones who suffer most.

I urge you to support H-5462 and help create a smoother, more compassionate transition for families and children who deserve every opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak in favor of H-5462.

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