

April 23, 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 Molly Smith, and I am testifying in support of H-5462 / S-247, 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 supporting this bill because I was in early intervention during my early childhood and like the example above, I was cut off from services when I turned 3 (January birthday) causing a gap of services. My family struggled to bridge the service gap and for a time I was removed from school programs due to lack of services caused by the gap in between when I aged out of early intervention and was eligible for other programs.

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

Thank you,

Molly Smith