

April 24, 2025

RE: In Support of H-5462 (Extension Option for Early Intervention)

Chairman Abney, Vice Chairs Slater and Marszalkowski and members of the House Finance Committee,

The Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families (RICCF) is comprised of forty-four member organizations who join to advocate for child well-being and family safety and stability. Our members provide a wide and deep range of services in every community in Rhode Island for behavioral and physical health, support and care for foster youth, special education, family stabilization, address domestic and sexual violence, shelter and housing- **including Early Intervention (EI)**.

Early intervention is a critical service to promote the growth and development of infants and toddlers with a developmental delay in one or more areas, including speech, physical ability or social skills. Services are provided in places where children usually play or take part in daily activities, and this early support is critical to ensure that children can develop to their fullest potential. Increasing the length of early intervention services beyond three years of age is a critical bridge to the formal school system.

As schools typically work on school year calendars, and school-based services are not always available immediately when a child turns three -especially if the child has a spring or summer birthday- there are gaps in services for children transitioning from EI to school-based special education. With the option for extended Early Intervention, these gaps and any development loss could be avoided. Six other states and Washington DC all have policies in place that allow families to extend Early Intervention after a child's third birthday.

It is critical that every child have proper support during this critical transition after three years of age to their first school year, and we support the proposed legislation. If adequately funded, the two-year planning period and three-year phase-in provides time for providers to plan, build the skills and capacity for the 3+ population, and strengthen relationships and handoffs with the schools to accomplish this new work.

Thank you for your consideration, and we urge passage of H5462.

Sincerely,



Tanja Kubas-Meyer
Executive Director