

Chris O'Brien

From: Ashley Cabral <ashcabral1023@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 23, 2025 3:15 PM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Parents as Teachers program

Chair Abney
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
Re: Support of the Family Home Visiting bill H-6073

Dear Chair Abney and members of the Committee,

My name is Ashley Wichlac

I wanted to share my thoughts about my time with Parents as Teachers since my son, Declan just graduated from the program and will be going on to attend Kindergarten. I first heard about the program from Beth Nitkin at WIC. When the Covid lockdown and isolation was beginning, I became worried preemptively that Declan's social emotional development was going to suffer because of it. I joined the program and at first the visits were through Zoom. I gained so much knowledge and learned many ideas of activities to do with Declan. My parent educator helped me understand where he was developmentally and what the next milestone that he was reaching for would be which helped me know what he should be doing and what we should be working on.

When he was not making progress with his speech, my parent educator connected me to Looking Upwards. He was enrolled in Early Intervention for about a year, receiving Speech therapy which gave him a great foundation for learning. He started making sounds and using words and communicating even if he didn't have the words - learning to use visual aids. Early Intervention helped me enroll Declan into the integrated preschool in our town. I don't think I would have known about any of these resources if it wasn't for Parents as Teachers. It would have been so much harder. My parent educator made it very easy to give my son support where he needed it and to support me. The support has been so important to teach me to be a better parent and to understand Declan and where he is developmentally and help him make progress. We attended a toileting workshop, offered through The Autism Project together, which was very helpful to give me information and tools to help create a reward system and he is now fully potty trained.

As we got to the end of our visits, my parent educator continued to be a resource and connected me with The Autism Project to help him get evaluated and referred me to a Community Health Worker program.

Parents as Teachers has had an significantly positive effect on my son's development journey and I believe every parent and child should have the opportunity to experience this program.

Please ensure this program continues

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ashley wichlac

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