



April 24, 2025

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly

Re: Support for H6073 - Family Home Visiting

Dear Chair Abney and House Finance Committee Members,

I write in support of H6073 and to request that the state invests \$355,374 in early childhood programming in order to draw down \$1.6 million in federal funding for Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) programs. In 2024, Rhode Island was one of only 3 states and territories in the U.S. that did not meet the full federal match, forfeiting some federal funding.

My name Marie Palumbo-Hayes, LICSW, and I am Chief of Community Services at Family Service of Rhode Island (FSRI). I oversee both the First Connections and the Healthy Families of America (HFA) programs at FSRI. It is alarming that both First Connections and HFA are at risk if Rhode Island is unable to maximize federal monies available.

Both First Connections and HFA provide a vital role in early childhood support for the most vulnerable of our population:

- First Connections Program is a short-term home visiting program where Registered Nurses, Social Workers and Certified Community Health Workers meet in the home with prenatal and postnatal mothers, newborns and families to address any medical, behavioral health or Social Determinants of Health needs, and provide information regarding safe sleep, breastfeeding and issues related to maternal post-partum anxiety and depression. First Connections staff are skilled at linking families to longer-term home visiting services and community resources.
- HFA, a MIECHV funded program, provides vital education and support to prenatal and postnatal mothers and children until their fifth birthday. HFA is an evidence-based model designed to reduce child abuse and neglect while improving developmental outcomes for children.

First Connections and HFA are instrumental in supporting families, reducing involvement with the child welfare system, and link children to services to make sure that they are best prepared to successfully enter kindergarten.



I encourage you to pass the H6073 in support of family home visiting to ensure that all Rhode Island families have access services to help their children and families thrive.

Thank you,

Marie Palumbo-Hayes

Marie Palumbo-Hayes, LICSW
Chief of Community Services
Family Service of Rhode Island