



Rhode Island Association for the
Education of Young Children



May 15, 2025

Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

The Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children voices its **strong support** of **H-5199** (McNamara) AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE RHODE ISLAND PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION ACT, which will amend the existing statute to include implementation and expansion guidelines aligned to the December 2022 "Report and Recommendations on RI Pre-K Expansion" developed by the RI Departments of Education and Human Services in partnership with the RI Children's Cabinet.

To date, we are making great progress on supporting access to RI Pre-K, with 25% of all RI 4-year-olds (and 44% of low-income 4-year-olds) attending, but implementing the reports recommendations is critical to meeting our goal of 70% of 4-year-olds (5,000 seats) attending free, high-quality Pre-K. T

The proposed recommendations include:

- clarify implementation goals
- firm up program sustainability and expand mixed-delivery funding models
- authorizing the Department of Education to promulgate rules and regulations to maintain quality
- require competitive salaries for RI Pre-K teachers
- require 30% funding set aside to preserve and expand infant/toddler programming
- sustain and expand TEACH scholarship opportunities to ensure an adequate supply of qualified early childhood educators

All of the above are informed recommendations from dedicated professionals, and RIAEYC applauds the General Assembly's response to the report. These recommendations not only support our Pre-K expansion goals, but also support the greater early childhood education system by centering and investing in early childhood educators and supporting infant and toddler programs that risk falling behind on compensation and quality improvement without additional support. We urge this committee and the General Assembly to pass this important legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Hildebrand'.

Lisa A. Hildebrand, M.A.
Executive Director
RIAEYC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alyson' followed by a stylized flourish.

Alyson Panzarella Girard, M.J.
Early Learning & Policy Specialist
RIAEYC