



May 15, 2025

Chairman Marvin Abney
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: In support of Rep Donovan's Joint Resolution H6019

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

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David Caprio
President and
Chief Executive Officer

We write in strong support of Rep Donovan's bill that would ensure continued investment in infant toddler child care. In 2024, \$1.1 million in state general revenue was transferred from RIDE to DHS to sustain and strengthen access to quality infant and toddler child care in accordance with the 2022 RI Pre-K expansion plan developed by the RI Department of Education, DHS and RI Children's Cabinet.

This funding is being used to supplement the wages of approximately 300 of the lowest paid but most qualified infant and toddler educators in Rhode Island, helping to keep some infant/toddler child care classrooms and family child care programs open across the state. This funding is not in the FY26 budget proposals for both RIDE and DHS but is absolutely needed to sustain access to quality infant/toddler care.

For over 190 years, we at Children's Friend have worked to advance the well-being and healthy development of the youngest and most vulnerable children in Rhode Island. Today, alongside our permanency, home visiting, child care, Head Start, and nutrition services, we provide high quality pre-k education to over 200 four-year-olds in our state funded Pre-K classrooms. For the families with whom we work, most of whom are earning less than the federal poverty level, our Pre-k, child care, and Head Start classrooms are a lifeline that enables them to go to work each day and strive for a better future for their children.

We currently have over 100 children on a wait list for infant and toddler slots and are delayed in opening a new location because we are struggling to hire teachers. And this wait list number under-represents the need, because many parents don't bother to put their name on the list after they hear how long the wait is to get into a program.

We were grateful that the state allocated funds for DHS to use on the infant/toddler workforce last year. We need that to continue. Please pass Rep Donovan's bill to continue to invest in our early childhood workforce so we can meet the incredible need of children, families and the state's economy.

Thank you for your time and review of this testimony, and for your continued efforts to support the children who are the future of our state. If you have further questions or need any additional information, please contact me at dcaprio@cfsri.org.

Sincerely,



David Caprio
President and CEO