



## **Written Testimony in Support of H-5196**

**Submitted by: Elisha Geller, Physical Therapist**

**Family Service of Rhode Island – Early Intervention**

**5-21-2025**

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of this vital legislation that would make the *Child Care for Child Care Educators* program permanent, remove income limitations, and expand eligibility to include Early Intervention staff. I am Elisha Geller, a Pediatric Physical Therapist, in Early Intervention at Family Service of Rhode Island, which serves over 500 infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities each year in Rhode Island.

As someone who has worked in the early childhood field for over 12 years, and in Pediatrics for almost 30 years, I cannot overstate how urgently this legislation is needed. Our Early Intervention program, like many others across the state, is grappling with unprecedented staffing challenges. Talented and passionate professionals are leaving the field—not because they don't love the work, but because they can't afford to stay. The cost of child care is one of the biggest barriers. Many of these Early Childhood professional parents require a second job to allow them to stay working in Early Intervention while their children are in child care, which is often unsustainable.

By making the *Child Care for Child Care Educators* program permanent, eliminating the income cap, and including Early Intervention staff, this bill recognizes the critical role that all early childhood professionals play in supporting young children and families. This is not just about affordability, it's about workforce retention, continuity of care, and the stability that families need.

Early Intervention is the key to our community's future. These families rely on Early Childhood specialists to guide them through these early years, and how to navigate a system when their child has a devastating diagnosis that will impact them physically, socially, educationally, and so forth. It is imperative that we recruit and retain passionate, knowledgeable and specialty

trained staff that can assist families during this challenging journey, with equipment needs, communication supports and the ability to sensitively provide families with hope for the future.

This program has a ripple effect. When our staff can rely on stable, affordable child care, they are less stressed, more present, and more likely to remain in their roles long-term. This stability benefits not only our workforce but the vulnerable children and families we serve through Early Intervention. Consistency in care is essential for building trust, meeting developmental goals, and improving long-term outcomes.

I urge you to pass this bill and ensure that the backbone of our early childhood system—the educators, therapists, and specialists—can afford to remain in this essential field. This investment in our workforce is ultimately an investment in children, families, and the future of our state.

Thank you for your leadership and support.

Sincerely,

**Elisha Geller, PT, c/NDT**

Pediatric Physical Therapist, Early Intervention

**Family Service of Rhode Island**

**[gellerel@familyserviceri.org](mailto:gellerel@familyserviceri.org)**