



May 22, 2025

The Honorable Marvin Abney, Chair
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

SUBJECT: Support for House Bill 5196

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the Committee:

The American Heart Association would like to voice support for House Bill 5196, AN ACT RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- THE RHODE ISLAND WORKS PROGRAM, by Representative Diaz, and we thank the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony.

The American Heart Association is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. Heart disease is the No. 1 killer worldwide, and stroke ranks second globally. Even when those conditions don't result in death, they cause disability and diminish quality of life. We want to see a world free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke. Our mission is to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.

House Bill 5196 would sustain and expand the successful Child Care for Child Care Educators Program by eliminating the sunset provision, removing the family income limit to help more staff, and making frontline staff in early intervention programs eligible. This is a powerful strategy to increase recruitment and retention of qualified educators and staff and address the staffing crisis in child care and early education programs. It will also provide more children with access to high-quality early learning environments.

The benefits of quality early care and education programs cannot be overstated. In the first few years of life, a child's brain develops rapidly, building an important foundation for future learning, behavior, and health.ⁱ According to an issue brief from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, children who participate in early childhood programs are more likely to grow up as healthy adults and have higher earnings.ⁱⁱ In addition, according to a study in Science, participation in high-quality early childhood programs can lead to significantly lower risks for cardiovascular and metabolic disease later in life.ⁱⁱⁱ Research by James Heckman reported high-quality birth-to-five programs can lead to better outcomes in education, health, social behaviors, and employment.^{iv}

The American Heart Association urges the committee to invest in Rhode Island's children, families, and early educators. Please recommend passage of this important legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Eastern States
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ⁱ Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts: A Science-Based Approach to Building a More Promising Future for Young Children and Families. May 2016.
http://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/From_Best_Practices_to_Breakthrough_Impacts-4.pdf.

ⁱⁱ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Early Childhood Experiences Shape Health and Well-Being Throughout Life (Issue Brief). August 2014. http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2014/rwjf414926

ⁱⁱⁱ Campbell FA, Conti G, Heckman J, et al. Early Childhood Investments Substantially Boost Adult Health. *Science*, 2014; 343(6178): 1478-1485, 10.1126/science.1248429.

^{iv} Heckman JJ; The Heckman Equation Project. Research Summary: The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program. 2016. https://heckmanequation.org/assets/2017/01/F_Heckman_CBAOnePager_120516.pdf.