



Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

May 22, 2025

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence RI, 02903

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Members of the Committee:


I am writing in support of House Bill 5281, *An Act Relating to Human Services – The Rhode Island Child Care Is Essential Act*. If passed, this legislation will expand eligibility for the Rhode Island Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), the state's childcare subsidy program, and raise reimbursement rates for childcare providers serving families participating in the program.

H5281 will benefit both families and childcare providers while helping the state meet its goal of expanding to 5,000 pre-kindergarten seats by 2028. Rhode Island families spend over 15 percent of their median income on childcare for one child—more than double the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' definition of affordable childcare. This bill will expand eligibility for state childcare subsidies, ensuring that families with an annual household income of up to \$90,740 are eligible for affordable care. It will also increase CCAP reimbursement rates to meet or exceed federal benchmark levels, enabling providers to deliver high-quality services to all families. Additionally, the bill introduces an infant bonus rate for CCAP providers serving children under 18 months, helping to address the demand for infant care, improve quality for this age group, and support families and caregivers in returning to work.

Providence is a childcare hub in Rhode Island, serving not only local families but also those who work and study in the city. However, many childcare centers are being forced to close classrooms—especially infant and toddler rooms—due to staffing shortages. The expiration of federal relief funds, which provided staffing bonuses, scholarships, and grants to early educators, has only exacerbated these challenges. This bill takes critical steps to address the issues of cost, access, quality, and workforce shortages in the state's childcare system. If passed, it will help Providence maintain and expand the number of high-quality childcare seats to serve both our residents and those who work or study in the city.

I commend Representative Diaz for her work in this critical area and urge the committee to vote in favor of this legislation.

Sincerely,


Brett P. Smiley
Mayor