

Testimony Relating to HJR-7127
Department of Health Budget – MIECHV and PediPRN Programs
House Committee on Finance
March 24, 2026
Divya Nair, Senior Policy Analyst, Economic Progress Institute

The Economic Progress Institute urges the Department of Health to allocate sufficient state funding to meet the federal match requirements for the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) programs and allocate sufficient state funding for the Pediatric Psychiatry Resource Network (PediPRN) program.

Rhode Island parents and babies deserve to have the support they need to have healthy outcomes. Investing state funding for MIECHV and PediPRN programs is not only sound investments, but also a commitment to the state's frontline workforce and to the well-being of our families with newborns.

MIECHV programs, such as Family Home Visiting and the First Connections, provide critical and reliable services in helping families meet their basic needs, along with long-term support to address housing, behavioral health, and child care needs. These are evidence-based, comprehensive programs that serve the whole family. Rhode Island is one of only four states, and the only one in New England, that does not provide state funds to support evidence-based home visiting.¹ By allocating just \$535,000 in state funding, Rhode Island would draw down \$1.6 million in new federal funding to improve access to family home visiting and support babies and families.

The PediPRN program is a critical phone consultation service that supports pediatricians in addressing children's mental health needs by offering same-day specialized clinical consultations, as well as resource and referral services. One in three children, ranging from ages 3 –17, have a diagnosable mental health condition, with over half struggling to find care.² PediPRN advances health equity for vulnerable children and aids in addressing Rhode Island's shortage of mental healthcare providers. Without state funding to continue the program, PediPRN would shut down this September, creating a gap in support for pediatric health care providers and reducing access to care for struggling families and children.

These programs are public health interventions proven to reduce the likelihood of future reliance on state or federally funded public benefit programs, making them cost-effective investments.³

¹ [Family Home Visiting in Rhode Island: Financing, Staffing, and Access, Dr. Fox, 2025](#)

² [Rhode Island Psychiatry Resource Network \(PRN\), Rhode Island Department of Health, 2025](#)

³ [Improving Outcomes for Children, National Conference of State Legislatures, 2022](#)

The Economic Progress Institute recommends additional state investments in MIECHV and PediPRN to sustain these programs for Rhode Island children and families.