

**4/27/2026**

**Testimony in Support of H-7011**

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

I am writing as a parent to share what the Rhode Island Auditory-Oral Program has meant to my son and to our family, and how deeply our lives have been shaped by its existence.

My son, Mark, was born deaf. Like many parents in that moment, we were overwhelmed, scared, and uncertain about what his future would hold. Before the age of two, he received bilateral cochlear implants, giving him access to sound, but sound alone was not enough. He needed skilled, specialized education during the earliest years of his life, when language, learning, and confidence are formed. From the ages of three to six, Mark attended the Rhode Island Auditory-Oral Program, and those years changed everything.

Today, Mark is a sophomore at East Greenwich High School. He is thriving academically, socially, and emotionally. He walks into his classrooms confident and capable. He communicates easily with his teachers and peers. He is building friendships, setting goals, and imagining a future full of possibilities, things that once felt frighteningly uncertain to us as parents.

Beyond the classroom, Mark is the starting quarterback for his high school football team, a role he has held since his freshman year. His journey with hearing loss and how far he has come has been shared on news broadcasts and hospital websites (links below), not because he is extraordinary, but because his story shows what is possible when children receive the right support at the right time.

None of this would have been possible without the intensive, early intervention and unwavering support provided by the Auditory-Oral Program during his most critical developmental years. The individualized instruction, the highly skilled educators, and the consistent, evidence-based approach gave Mark the tools he needed to develop spoken language, strong listening skills, and the confidence to succeed in a mainstream educational environment.

Those early years were foundational. The progress Mark made during that time did not fade; it carried him forward. Without the Auditory-Oral Program, my son would not be where he is today. He would not be attending public high school alongside his peers, working toward his goals, and thriving every single day. This program does not just support children in early childhood; it changes the entire trajectory of their lives.

Programs like the Rhode Island Auditory-Oral Program offer more than education. They offer hope. They offer independence. They give children the chance to reach their full potential and give families the reassurance that their child's future is bright. Our family will always be profoundly grateful for the role this program played in our son's development and success.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our family's experience and the importance of sustaining services that make life-changing outcomes like my son's possible for other children and families across Rhode Island.

[High school athlete with disability shines in first varsity game, secures win](#)

[Mark's winning pass with cochlear implants | Boston Children's Answers](#)

Sincerely,

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