

Dear Chairman Abney,

I am reaching out as a Teacher of the Deaf in Providence Public Schools to ask for your support in securing continued state funding for the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program (RIAOP).

In my day-to-day work, I support students who are deaf or hard of hearing in accessing their education. While many services can be provided at the district level, programs like RIAOP offer a level of specialized instruction and expertise that cannot be recreated elsewhere in our state.

RIAOP is the only auditory oral program in Rhode Island. For students and families who choose a listening and spoken language approach, this program is not optional, it is essential. Without it, students may lose access to services that directly support their ability to communicate, learn, and fully participate in school.

I work with students who depend on consistent auditory access, structured listening environments, and trained professionals who understand how to support language development through hearing technology. These are not supports that can simply be “filled in” if the program is no longer available.

Beyond academics, the impact is long-term. Students who receive appropriate early and ongoing support are more likely to develop independence, self-advocacy skills, and successful transitions into higher education and the workforce.

Without stable funding, we risk losing a critical statewide resource and limiting options for families who deserve access to a full continuum of services.

I strongly urge you to support continued and sustainable funding for RIAOP.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to students across Rhode Island.

This perspective reflects my professional experience and does not represent the official position of my district.

Sincerely,

Alicia Aceto

Teacher of the Deaf

Providence Public Schools

Alicia Aceto