

February 25, 2026

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

I am writing to express my strong support for Joint Resolution H7011, which appropriates funding for the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program (RIAOP). I respectfully urge the Committee to consider that this funding be provided in a manner that allows for the RIAOP to continue receiving annual support beyond the 2026-27 school year.

The Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program is a crucial statewide educational program whose mission is “To prepare children with hearing loss for an education in their community schools by providing them with the tools they will need for successful inclusion and achievement while striving to empower their families with the knowledge and confidence necessary to support their children in their lifelong journey.”

As an audiologist and educator, I have seen firsthand the meaningful impact that the Program has on children and families across the state. Most children born with hearing loss have parents who hear normally. These parents may have no knowledge about or experience with hearing loss and are often scared and confused about what they should do for their child. These parents typically wish for their child to use the language of their family – usually spoken language. The RIAOP is an invaluable resource for these families to assure that the child is growing and developing appropriately and is receiving proper intervention services according to the child’s needs and the parents’ wishes.

This funding will directly support the Program’s mission of supporting families who choose a spoken language modality for their children and allow it to continue delivering high-quality services that are not readily available elsewhere in the state.

I respectfully urge you to support this resolution and approve the proposed appropriation to the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program.

Sincerely,

Andrew P. McGrath, AuD  
Director, Women & Infants Hospital Dept. of Audiology  
Clinical Asst. Professor, Brown University Medical School