

April 24, 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 provides funding for the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program (RIAOP). I respectfully urge the Committee to structure this funding in a way that ensures the program can continue receiving consistent annual support beyond the 2026–2027 school year.

The Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program is a vital statewide educational resource dedicated to helping children with hearing loss develop the skills needed to succeed in their community schools. By fostering communication and independence, the program not only supports children’s academic achievement but also empowers families with the tools and confidence to guide their children throughout their educational journeys.

As a grandparent of a child served by this program, I have personally witnessed the profound impact RIAOP has on children and families across Rhode Island. My granddaughter—and children like her—have made incredible progress, going from limited or no speech to effectively communicating their wants and needs. This growth has positively transformed our entire family dynamic, and we cannot imagine our lives without these essential services.

Continued funding will ensure that families who choose a spoken-language approach for their children have access to high-quality services that are not widely available elsewhere in the state.

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

Sincerely,  
Angela Lasher  
Grandmother of Asa Thayer  
Chepachet, RI