



February 17<sup>th</sup>, 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 2026-2027 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 journeys."

As the founder of the cochlear implant program at Rhode Island Hospital and Hasbro Children's Hospital and the only Otologist/Neurotologist in Rhode Island, I have seen firsthand the meaningful impact this program has on children and families across Rhode Island. I have witnessed a significant number of my cochlear implant recipients able to enter the mainstream educational system with the critical support of RIAOP providers. Without this support, these children will have a much harder time achieving their full potential.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Duff, MD". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Brian E Duff, MD, F.A.C.S.

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