

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 a parent of a now adult child served by the Program, I have seen firsthand the meaningful impact this Program has on children and families across Rhode Island.

I can say without hesitation that my child would not be in college today without the unwavering support, guidance, and advocacy the Program has provided throughout her public school years.

The Program ensured my child always had access to the appropriate technology, specialized instruction, and a team that truly understood her needs. Just as importantly, it gave her the confidence and skills to succeed not only in the classroom, but in life beyond it.

It is difficult to imagine what her experience would have been like without this level of support—placed in classrooms without the necessary resources, expertise, or advocacy to help her thrive. The Auditory Oral Program made all the difference in her educational journey and future opportunities.

I am eternally grateful for everything this program has done for my daughter and our family, and I strongly encourage its continued support.

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,

Caroline Ward-Smith

Parent

Cranston, RI