

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 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 friend of a parent whose child is served by the program, I have seen firsthand the meaningful impact it has on children and families. My close friend's child was born deaf and with a degenerative condition that is slowly leading to blindness. Since receiving a cochlear implant and ongoing specialized language training, my friend's child is growing into a vivacious, communicative kid with lots of friends and who loves school. As family friends who do not know how to communicate through American Sign Language, we treasure our ability to communicate with our friend's deaf child through direct speech.

This funding will directly support the Auditory Oral Program 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,

Cristina DiChiera
Foster, RI

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