



BROWN

Department of Pathology and
Laboratory Medicine
Box G-E5
Providence, RI 02912
401 863-3119
Fax 401 863-9118

Support of H7011
Making an Appropriation to the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program (RIAOP)

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

As an employee of Brown University, working in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, I know precisely what funding can do for a select group of individuals who rely on government support. Therefore, 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 someone who is deeply connected to the deaf and hard of hearing community, this issue is very personal to me. My father graduated from Rhode Island School for the Deaf and fortunately has been able to circumvent everyday life with his disability. This is due, in part, to the fact that his children are actually hearing. However, the disease that produced my father’s deafness, [Waardenberg Syndrome](#), is still very prevalent in our family. The two features consistent across all types of Waardenburg syndrome are some degree of congenital hearing loss and some degree of pigmentation deficiencies. My siblings have this disease but thankfully are not deaf. Unfortunately, that is not the case for my nieces and nephews who are deaf and hard of hearing. This will be an ongoing issue in my family for many generations to come since Waardenberg Syndrome is hereditary.

RIAOP provides specialized instruction, audiological support, and family-centered guidance that cannot be replicated in a typical mainstream setting without dedicated expertise. Without sustained legislative support for this program, I believe that children like my nieces and nephews who are bright, capable, and full of potential, will be placed in environments that are not equipped to meet their unique needs. Therefore, it is essential that early, specialized intervention is received in order to shape a child’s academic trajectory and long-term independence. This will increase the risk that they fall behind academically and socially. I respectfully urge you not to let this happen.

This funding will directly support the program’s mission of assisting families who have chosen 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 ask for your support of this resolution so that the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program can continue providing critical services to children and families across our state.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Boynton
Administrative Coordinator
Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
Brown University