

April 27, 2026

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

Thank you for your service and dedication to your local constituents and residents across RI. I am writing to express my strong support for Joint Resolution **H 7011- Making an Appropriation to the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program**, submitted on 1/7/26 by Rep. McNamara and co-sponsored by Rep. Handy and Rep. Fascia. My name is Erin Manchester and I am a licensed pediatric occupational therapist who has worked in the RI Auditory Oral Program (RIAOP) for the past 18 years. I have witnessed the profound changes this program has made on students and their families across the state.

Created by RIDE in 2005, the mission of RIAOP is “to prepare children with hearing loss for successful inclusion and full participation in their community schools by providing the necessary skills to empower families with the knowledge and confidence necessary to support their children in their lifelong journeys.” RIAOP provides equitable access to specialized instruction to students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH) and utilize cochlear implants and/or hearing aid technology to access spoken language. RIAOP provides services across RI including early intervention, an in-house program at an elementary school in Foster, RI, and K-12 outreach services to 150 students in their local school districts. This funding will directly support the mission of RIAOP to support families choosing a spoken-language modality for their children and continue to access high-quality services not otherwise available in the state.

I respectfully urge you to support this resolution and approve the proposed appropriation to the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

E. Manchester

Erin Manchester
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