

April 24, 2026

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

We are writing to express our strong support for Joint Resolution H7011, which provides funding for the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program (RIAOP). We respectfully urge the Committee to ensure this funding is structured in a way that allows the program to continue receiving consistent annual support beyond the 2026–2027 school year.

The Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program is a vital statewide educational resource dedicated to preparing children with hearing loss to succeed in their community schools. By equipping children with the tools needed for meaningful inclusion and academic achievement, the program also empowers families with the knowledge and confidence to support their children throughout their educational journeys.

As parents of a child served by the program, we have personally witnessed the meaningful impact RIAOP has on children and families across Rhode Island. Our daughter, Asa, and children like her have made tremendous progress—from not being able to speak to successfully communicating their wants and needs. This growth has positively shaped our entire family dynamic, and we cannot imagine our lives without these services.

Our daughter deserves equal access to educational opportunities. While other programs serve important roles, they do not provide the same level of focus on spoken language development that Asa and children like her need to thrive.

Continued funding will ensure that families who choose a spoken-language approach for their children have access to high-quality services that are not readily available elsewhere in the state.

We respectfully urge you to support this resolution and approve the proposed appropriation for the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program.

Sincerely,

Evan & Megan Thayer

Parents of Asa Thayer

Chepachet, RI