

March 10, 2026

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 child served by the Program, I have seen firsthand the meaningful impact this Program has on children and families across Rhode Island. The RIAOP program is currently serving my child and has been since pre-K. Without this program my son would not have been able to be mainstreamed in the public school system. Much of his success has been due to the teacher of the deaf going into his school and teaching him the tools he needs to access learning in school and the world around him. It is important that the funding continues, and is stable so there are no laps in services or uncertainty about continued services. This uncertainty affects not only the children and families but also the schools that need to plan for the year ahead.

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,

Kate St. Pierre
Parent of a child in the RIAOP program
North Kingstown, RI