

Dear Chairman Abney,

We are writing as students in the Program in Liberal Medical Education (PLME) at Brown University to express our strong support for House Joint Resolution 7011 — Making an Appropriation to the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program. As future physicians committed to improving the health and well-being of Rhode Island communities, we believe every child deserves equal access to the educational and communication resources necessary to thrive. Every child possesses the potential to become a future physician, nurse, artist, teacher, or community leader, and that potential should never be limited by barriers that we as a society have the power to address.

According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, approximately 90% of children born with hearing loss are born to hearing parents. This means that many families may have limited experience or resources to navigate the educational and communication challenges associated with hearing impairment. The Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program provides critical individualized family service learning plans, equipping parents with the support necessary to raise a hearing-impaired child.

In addition to family support, the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program plays a critical role in offering specialized auditory-oral instruction, speech and listening therapy, and hearing assistive technology support to school districts. These programs are essential to help children successfully integrate into mainstream educational environments. Delivering these highly specialized services requires significant resources, underscoring the importance of the proposed \$1.2 million appropriation to sustain the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program.

At a time when federal special education funding remains uncertain, continued state investment is essential to ensure these services remain available to Rhode Island families without disruption. Rhode Island has a responsibility to invest in its own children and ensure that every child, regardless of disability, has access to equal opportunity. Throughout our experiences in medicine, public health, and community engagement, we have witnessed how disparities in access to healthcare and educational support can profoundly shape the futures of children and families. House Joint Resolution 7011 represents Rhode Island's commitment to protecting vulnerable children, supporting inclusive education, and ensuring equal opportunity for all students regardless of disability or circumstance.

As students preparing to dedicate our lives to caring for others, we strongly believe that compassion and equity must guide public policy decisions. We respectfully urge you and the House Finance Committee to support House Joint Resolution 7011. We implore you to please help ensure that Rhode Island children with hearing loss continue receiving the specialized services they need to succeed and thrive.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Riya Reddy & Sameer Ali  
Program in Liberal Medical Education (PLME), Brown University