

February 23, 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.

As the aunt of a child served by RIAOP, I have seen firsthand the meaningful impact this program has on children and families across Rhode Island. Before his inclusion in the program, my nephew was just learning to listen to sounds for the first time. Loud family gatherings were overwhelming for him, and he needed to be spoken to at very close range in order to understand communication. Now, he loves to FaceTime family members to tell us about his school day, and he confidently shares silly stories he makes up or talks in detail about construction vehicles. I see how much his ability to communicate has grown, and it is clear to me how critical consistent support from this program has been in that progress. I worry about what his future holds if he does not continue to have the support of the Program, and I also worry about the stress that uncertainty about the future of the Program places on his parents.

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,

Sandra Lavery
Aunt of a Child Served by the RIAOP
Tiverton, RI