

Stephanie Egan
1607 Middle Rd.
East Greenwich, RI 02818
stephegan7@gmail.com

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Finance Committee Chair
RI State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903
rep-abney@rilegislature.gov

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

I am writing to express my unwavering support for Joint Resolution H7011, which appropriates funding for the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program (RIAOP). I respectfully urge you to consider providing critical funding that allows the RIAOP to continue receiving annual support beyond the 2026-2027 school year.

The RIAOP 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 an Auditory-Oral Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, I have seen firsthand the meaningful impact that the RIAOP has on children with hearing loss and their families across Rhode Island. The RIAOP is the first and only program of its kind in the state. It provides specialized auditory-oral education that helps children who are deaf or hard of hearing develop listening and spoken language skills, enabling many students to access mainstream educational environments, and participate fully in their communities. Students enrolled in the RIAOP must be able to continue their education within the program in order to make meaningful progress and achieve long-term success, with the goal of eventually returning to their home school districts.

Children with hearing loss in Rhode Island deserve equitable access to educational options that meet their individual needs and reflect family preferences. While the Rhode Island School for the Deaf currently receives annual state funding, families who choose the auditory-oral pathway through the RIAOP should also receive annual state support. Supporting Joint Resolution H7011 is essential to ensure equitable funding for programs serving children who are deaf or hard of hearing. This resolution will enable the RIAOP to continue its mission of supporting families who choose a spoken language modality through an exceptional program that is not available elsewhere in the state.

By supporting Joint Resolution H7011, you will help ensure that children with hearing loss and their families continue to have access to this vital statewide program. Your support will sustain an educational pathway that allows students to develop listening and spoken language skills, access inclusive learning environments, and ultimately return to and thrive in their home school districts.

I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of Joint Resolution H7011 to approve the proposed appropriation to the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program so that this critical program can continue serving Rhode Island families. Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to supporting equitable educational opportunities for children with hearing loss in our state.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Egan, M.S.Ed.
Auditory-Oral Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Warwick Public Schools
stephanie.egan@warwickschools.org