



April 28, 2026

Chairman Marvin Abney
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: In support of Rep. Donovan's H7680, to support Head Start and RI Pre-K

Dear Chair Abney and members of the Committee:

We write in support of Representative Donovan's bill H7680, which would update Rhode Island's school funding formula by clarifying that the Early Childhood Categorical Fund may be used to support **both** the state-managed RI Pre-K program and the federally managed Head Start program.

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For over 190 years, Children's Friend has worked to advance the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's youngest and most vulnerable children. Today, alongside our permanency, home visiting, child care, Head Start, and nutrition services, we provide high-quality prekindergarten education to more than 200 four-year-olds in our state-funded Pre-K classrooms. For the families we serve—most of whom have incomes below the federal poverty level—our Pre-K, child care, and Head Start classrooms are a lifeline that enables parents to work and build a better future for their children.

H7680 is an important and practical update because it aligns state funding with Rhode Island's mixed-delivery early childhood system. RI Pre-K already operates through a mixed-delivery model that includes Head Start agencies, local schools, and community-based child care providers, and Head Start offers comprehensive services that go well beyond early education alone.

Some families are best served in a school-based prekindergarten classroom, while others need the comprehensive, community-based supports that Head Start provides, including family engagement, health and nutrition services, developmental screenings, and connections to additional resources.

Clarifying that the Early Childhood Categorical Fund can support both models will help Rhode Island sustain and expand the full range of high-quality prekindergarten options available to young children and their families.

The bill also promotes **stronger coordination by requiring the Rhode Island Department of Education to work with the Department of Human Services**

child care office and the Head Start Collaboration Office in allocating funds. That alignment will help support both sustainability and thoughtful expansion of voluntary, free, high-quality prekindergarten for three- and four-year-olds.

For these reasons, Children's Friend respectfully urges you to support H7680. Thank you for your time and review of this testimony, and for your continued efforts to support the children who are the future of our State. If you have further questions or need any additional information, please contact me at dcaprio@cfsri.org.

Sincerely, 

David Caprio
President and CEO