



To: House Finance Committee
From: Maribeth Calabro, President
Date: April 28, 2026
Re: **Prekindergarten Expansion**
Testimony in Support of H 8163 (McNamara, et al.)

On behalf of the thousands of educators and health professionals represented by the RIFTHP, I am writing to express our strong support for H 8163, a critical companion to S 3147. This legislation establishes essential guidelines for the expansion of high-quality prekindergarten programs for children ages 3 to 4, directly improving school readiness across Rhode Island.

As a career educator, I have seen firsthand that a student's success in later years is often rooted in their earliest experiences. This bill aligns with our core values by ensuring that:

Competitive Compensation: It means that teacher wages and benefits in these programs remain competitive with similarly qualified kindergarten teachers, helping to address the critical staffing crisis in our schools.

High Quality Standards: By requiring state-managed programs to meet or exceed National Institute for Early Education Research standards, the bill ensures that "high-quality" is not just a label, but a guarantee of rigorous educator certification and appropriate class sizes.

Support for Diverse Learners: The bill specifically targets support for students with special needs and English language learners, populations that require specialized, often more expensive, services to thrive.

Equitable Access: Investing in publicly funded pre-K removes the financial barriers that often prevent capable students from starting their education on equal footing.

RIFTHP believes that the state has a responsibility to ensure public education dollars are used to strengthen our state-run infrastructure and support our communities. By codifying these standards and funding pre-k programs, H 8163 represents a profound return on investment for our workforce and our future.

We urge this Committee to pass H 8163 and take this concrete step toward a more equitable and effective education system for all Rhode Island children.

Thank you for your time and your continued commitment to our students.

Maribeth Calabro
President, RIFTHP

356 SMITH STREET PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02908-3761 (401) 273-9800 FAX (401) 331-8815

• **Maribeth K. Calabro**, President • **Maria Manzi**, Executive Assistant • **Bridget McDonough**, Administrative Assistant •
• **Michael J. Mullane**, Field Representative • **James A. Parisi**, Field Representative •
• **Christopher Lambert**, Field Representative • **Jeremy Sencer**, Field Representative •
• **Sean Doyle**, Field Representative •