

Rhode Island Chapter

INCORPORATED IN RHODE ISLAND

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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RIAAP Testimony in Support of SB2845

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

I'm writing on the behalf of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (RIAAP) in support of HB7794, which strengthens Family Home Visiting in Rhode Island by codifying the First Connections program in statute and improving funding of evidence-based home visiting programs.

As a pediatrician practicing in Rhode Island for the past 30 years, I have seen first hand the challenges that young families face as they welcome a child (or children) into the world. Overwhelmed and tired, many parents struggle to balance their own physical and emotional needs as they navigate through infancy and early childhood. Family Home Visiting, either as a short-term check-in through a program like First Connections, or as longer support through an evidence-based program like Healthy Families America or Parents as Teachers can change the trajectory of a child's life.

Unfortunately, over the past 5 years enrollment in Family Home Visiting has declined significantly in Rhode Island (51% for First Connections, 32% for the evidence-based programs), so fewer and fewer children and families get this critical support. While the reason for this decline is complicated, one of the primary driving factors is inconsistent funding of agencies, which had led several agencies to stop providing family home visiting services altogether, and for one program, Nurse Family Partnership to leave the state completely. Those agencies that continue to provide family home visiting struggle with high staff turnover (28% between 2024 and 2025) and inflexible contracts that make it difficult to break even.

HB7794 is an opportunity for Rhode Island to send a statement that we are here to support families and young children.

Thank you in advance for your support...

Gregory Fox, MD, FAAP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory Fox".

Advocacy Chair, Past President
Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

