



May 12, 2026

Chair Abney
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support of the Family Home Visiting bill H7794

Dear Chairman and members of the Committee,

My name is Marie Palumbo-Hayes, LICSW, the Chief of Community Health at Family Service of Rhode Island, a health and human service organization with the mission “to advance opportunity and hope in our communities.” In my role, I oversee a variety of programs, which includes early childhood family visiting services under contract with RIDOH: First Connections and Healthy Families America, and Early Intervention under EOHHS.

I write today in strong support of Representative Giraldo's H7794 bill and encourage you to ensure that Rhode Island adequately funds the state's home visiting programs, puts the First Connections Program in statute, requires Rhode Island Department of Health to change their data reporting requirements, and requires Medicaid to increase rates for Early Intervention Providers to the recommended 2025 OHIC review.

I urge you to ensure that Rhode Island meets the state funding matching requirements for the federal Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funds in order to be able to draw down all allowable federal funds so that high-quality home visiting programs such as Healthy Families America are offered to all families who could benefit. Rhode Island is one of a few states that does draw down the maximum allowable MIECHV funds resulting in forfeited federal monies that are vital for the sustainability of early childhood home visiting programs statewide.

For FY27, I request that Rhode Island make an investment in general funds required to receive the \$1.6 million match to help fund Early Childhood home visiting programs, increase their full Medicaid reimbursement rates as recommended from the 2025 OHIC review, and that the First Connections Program is put into statute. All of these home visiting programs are vital to the health and wellbeing of babies, children and their families.

Sincerely,
Marie Palumbo-Hayes

Marie Palumbo-Hayes, LICSW
Chief of Community Health, Family Service of Rhode Island