



Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children



May 14, 2026

**The Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children voices its strong support for H-7393 (Diaz) The Rhode Island Child Care Is Essential Act.**

This bill will transform Rhode Island's child care system by:

- 1. Allowing more families to qualify for the RI Child Care Assistance Program** by raising the family income limits to qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program to the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant benchmark, 85% of the state median family income and raises the "exit" income limit to 100% of the state median family income. This will allow more families to access care, which will support early learning programs by increasing enrollment. According to a survey conducted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 40% of Rhode Island early learning programs that responded indicated being under enrolled, and not for lack of demand.
- 2. Adjusting rates for the RI Child Care Assistance Program to comply with the federal equal access standards** by meeting or exceeding the current federal equal access standard (75th percentile of the 2024 RI Child Care Market Rate Survey) for all ages and settings. This investment is long overdue, as Rhode Island has cut \$46 million in state general revenue funding for child care assistance. This leaves early learning programs struggling. The same NAEYC survey found that 34% of Rhode Island based respondents feel their economic situation has worsened in the last year, 40% of early childhood educators that responded are feeling burned out, and 54% have worsening feelings of uncertainty. This is a direct result of our state's lack of investment in the sector.

Families living paycheck to paycheck in Rhode Island are forced to foot the bill for those staggering child care costs without assistance. This investment child care is an investment in working families that will transform their budgets, thereby benefitting Rhode Island's economy during this time of economic uncertainty.

The attached factsheets are provided to further convey the necessity of this investment. Please support H-7393 (Diaz) The Rhode Island Child Care Is Essential Act.

Thank You,

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