ANGÉLICA INFANTE-GREEN
Commissioner

HARRISON PETERS
Superintendent

Providence Schools

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March 22, 2021

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair
House Committee on Finance
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

I am writing to express support for House Bill 5062, the Rhode Island Early Childhood Innovation Act, which would support high quality pre-kindergarten programs for the most vulnerable children in Rhode Island.

As you know, Providence Public School District (PPSD) is in the first year of turnaround efforts in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Education. Our five-year Turnaround Action Plan identifies the expansion of Pre-K offerings for Providence children as a key goal, noting that fewer than one percent of Providence four-year olds were enrolled in a high-quality Pre-K classroom in Providence in 2019. High quality early childhood programs are beneficial for all students, but are especially crucial for at-risk children who would be otherwise be starting kindergarten at a disadvantage academically.

The proposed legislation would establish an annual investment by the state to fund early childhood programs for children three years and older. In Providence, additional funding would give us the ability to build and strengthen partnerships with early intervention programs to help our children successfully transition to kindergarten. Additionally, we would be able to invest in materials and develop and expand specialized programs for children beginning at age three.

We especially appreciate that the competitive funding would be prioritized toward programs with evidence of effectiveness that "seek to engage and support parents and caregivers as leaders in their child's education." Every initiative PPSD is pursuing as part of the district's turnaround prioritizes family, student and community voice from design to implementation, and we know this engagement will be key to the success our prekindergarten programs.

Thank you for considering House Bill 5062, and funding for Pre-K-12 public education programs.

Sincerely,

Harrison Peters
Superintendent

cc: Representative Joseph M. McNamara, House Education Committee Chair