Family Service
OF RHODE ISLAND

April 8, 2021

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

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed **House Bill No. 5672, an Act Relating to Human Services – RI Childcare is Essential Act** and **Section 6 of Article 13 of the Governor's budget (House Bill No. 6122)** pertaining to "Child Care – State Subsidies."

My name is Margaret Holland McDuff and I am CEO of Family Service of Rhode Island (FSRI). FSRI is a social service organization with the mission "to advance equity, hope, and opportunity in our communities." We provide programming and services to support children, individuals and families across the state; the majority of the people we serve are Providence residents and over 50% of our clients are under the age of 18.

I support the proposed House Bill No. 5672 and Section 6 of Article 13 of the Governor's Budget (House Bill No. 6122). Both are significant pieces of legislation addressing reimbursement rates paid to licensed childcare centers and ensuring access to quality childcare for all families in our state.

Bill H-5672 outlines many of the issues facing the RI childcare industry, including providing equitable access to programs through subsidies and recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce. FSRI supports the revisions outlined in the bill to address these issues, including: permanent increases to Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) rates (including connecting the rates to the programs BrightStars 5 tier-rating to promote quality programming); weekly infant care bonuses; capping family copayments at 7% of family income; and enabling more low-income working families to qualify for a CCAP certificate by restoring eligibility to families at or below 225% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and allowing families to retain subsidies up to 300% FPL.

Access to quality and affordable childcare is vital for the wellbeing of all families and children; this includes enabling parents to pursue education to obtain better jobs to provide for their families economically, to go to work and be able to support their families, and also to provide children an opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive in a supportive and healthy childcare setting. The changes outlined in H-5672 and Section 6, Article 13 of the budget are a step in the right direction in addressing some of the challenges facing the childcare industry and workforce, especially emerging from the COVID pandemic, and positively impacting families across our state through increased access to quality childcare.

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation that ensures essential childcare services for all Rhode Island families and affects future of outcomes of Rhode Island's children and communities. I encourage you to support this bill and budget article. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Margaret Holland McDuff
CEO

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