



Chair, House Committee on Health and Human Services
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of H-7627

Chair Donovan:

My name is Naiommy Baret and I am testifying in support of H-7627, a bill that would allow children to stay in Early Intervention until the September after they turn three. The current Early Intervention system in RI is only required to serve children until they turn 3 and then they are immediately cut off. If children are still eligible for services, they are then supposed to be enrolled in their district's preschool special education program. Currently, finding a placement that meets the needs of these students is extremely difficult and children are losing out on valuable education and therapies, particularly when the child turns 3 after the school year is underway.

This bill would:

- Give families the choice of staying with their EI provider until the start of the school year after the child turns 3;
- Ensure continuity of care for children receiving services; and
- Provides adequate time and support for providers to ensure they are able to serve children past the age of 3.

I am supporting this bill because when my child was diagnosed with epilepsy at 2 years old, it was a challenging and overwhelming time. However, Early Intervention services provided me with the support and resources I needed to navigate this journey and ensure the best possible outcomes for my child. The support and guidance provided by early intervention were instrumental in helping me navigate the challenges of my child's epilepsy diagnosis. They not only provided us with immediate support but also equipped me with the knowledge and resources necessary to advocate for my child's medical and developmental needs. Their expertise and guidance were truly invaluable during this uncertain and overwhelming time.

Early Intervention services were a lifeline for my child and many others. The dedicated professionals in this program have provided invaluable support, guidance, and therapy that helped my child develop essential skills and reach their full potential. However, the impact of the gap after intervention services make a huge difference. My child regressed during this time and his seizures increased and my mental health increased. Though he was eligible for special education it wasn't until 5 months later after much fighting that we were able to obtain "placement". This is what many parents have to navigate on top of our children's social emotional and mental well being and our own.

I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact that Early Intervention has had on my child's life. Though we had some challenges during that gap, I saw how those foundational skills emerged again once he had stable placement to continue to develop them. Through these services, my child has made significant progress in their development, communication, and overall well-being. The dedication and



expertise of the Early Intervention professionals have been instrumental in empowering my child to overcome challenges and thrive til today

I urge you to vote in favor of bill H-7627.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify.

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