



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

April 27, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to express strong support for the proposed legislation, S2433, relating to the Department of Human Services and Rhode Island's voluntary quality rating system for early care, education, and school-age childcare programs.

As a leader in youth development and out-of-school time programming, I deeply appreciate the intent of Rhode Island's quality rating system to promote continuous improvement and ensure that families have access to high-quality care. This legislation thoughtfully strengthens that system by recognizing an important distinction for programs operating within RIDE-certified school buildings.

School-based childcare programs benefit from facilities that already meet rigorous state standards for health, safety, and educational adequacy. By deeming facility-based elements of observational tools, such as SACERS, as met or neutral in these settings, this bill ensures that program quality ratings more accurately reflect what matters most: the strength of programming, staff engagement, and the experiences of children.

Without this adjustment, high-quality school-age programs may be unfairly penalized for factors beyond their control, such as room configuration or building design, elements that are already governed and approved through school certification processes. This change promotes fairness, reduces redundancy, and allows providers to focus their efforts and resources on delivering impactful, enriching experiences for children and families.

Importantly, this legislation maintains all existing health, safety, and licensing requirements, ensuring that there is no compromise in standards or oversight. Rhode Island has long been a leader in advancing quality in early care and education. This bill is a smart, targeted improvement that aligns policy with practice and supports providers in delivering the highest level of service to our communities.

I respectfully urge your support for this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeff Merhige
CEO

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