



April 28, 2026

Senate Committee on Education
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Fund Early Intervention Rates

Chair Gallo and members of the Committee,

I write today in strong support of Senator Valverde's bill, S-2785. My name is Tiana Ochoa Teo and I serve as Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships at Family Service of RI. I am a licensed clinical social worker and have spent my career working alongside Rhode Island's children, families, and the providers who serve them.

Early Intervention is not a "nice-to-have." It is a federal entitlement under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and one of the most evidence-based investments our state can make in a child's long-term health, learning, and wellbeing. The services delivered through RI's Early Intervention programs, care coordination, developmental and educational support, specialized nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language services, are provided in the place a young child grows and learns most: their home. For the infants and toddlers who need them, these supports change developmental trajectories. For families, there can be a difference between thriving and managing in crisis.

As a clinician, I have seen what happens when families wait too long for these services, and what happens when they receive them on time. Early Intervention prevents more costly interventions later, in special education, in mental health care, in pediatric medicine, and in our child welfare system. But the system can only deliver on that promise if it is adequately resourced. Years of stagnant Medicaid rates have left providers unable to recruit and retain qualified staff, and families are feeling that strain through longer waiting lists and reduced service intensity.

S-2785 is a measured, fiscally responsible step in the right direction. By funding the first scheduled Medicaid rate increase at 100% of the rate recommended by the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner under the new statutory rate review; the bill begins to align



reimbursement with the actual cost of providing care. Equally important, the bill's requirement that the state continue to update the Early Intervention Dashboard with current information on waiting lists and staff vacancies brings the transparency and accountability that families, providers, and policymakers all need to make sound decisions.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass S-2785. Rhode Island's youngest children, and the workforce that serves them, deserve a system that is both adequately funded and publicly accountable.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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