



STATE of RHODE ISLAND
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Legislative Impact Statement

To: Senator Hanna M. Gallo , Chair Senate Education Committee
From: Elisabeth Hubbard, Executive Secretary
Re: Senate 2785 AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- MATERNAL AND CHILD
HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

The Governor's Commission on Disabilities' Legislation Committee has developed a Legislative Impact Statement on the bill listed below. The Commission would be pleased to present testimony to the committee. Please contact me (462-01110) for additional information.

This bill directly addresses a staffing crisis that has left disabled infants and toddlers waiting for early intervention services by mandating a Medicaid rate increase and requiring public transparency on wait times and vacancies. It also increases requirements to make parents more informed of their rights.

This bill contains three actions that we believe would benefit infants and young children with disabilities:

1. Mandates a Medicaid rate increase estimated at \$211,200 to be implemented by October 1, 2026. This would address the 20-year rate freeze that has caused staffing shortages and created a waiting list for disabled infants needing service.
2. The bill requires monthly updates on wait-times by city and town. This gives parents and advocates real-time visibility into whether children are receiving timely evaluations. It would also allow the state to see how many families are waiting beyond the federally mandated 45-days limit for services and where those families are located.
3. This bill also strengthens parents' rights by requiring EOHHS to post complaint procedures on its website in multiple languages. This would ensure that families who are denied or dissatisfied with services know what their appeal rights are and how to enforce them.

While opponents of the bill may raise the concern that it will raise costs and point to recent, modest increases in 2023 brought a reduction in families waiting longer than the 45-day limit from 176 to 736.¹ This shows that increases in rates work. Despite this, over 100 children are still waiting for more than 45 days for an evaluation, and there are also severe staff shortages, highlighting how prior increases were insufficient to fully solve the crisis.² The average days of the families who are still waiting is 98.9 days. This means that children are not receiving services during the most crucial period of development. Furthermore, research shows that early intervention reduces the need for special education and long-term support services. Children are better prepared to participate in school and will benefit more from their education there. The state would ultimately spend less on special education costs and help these students grow to be more independent adults. The second part of this bill addresses the rights of parents. It would require EOHHS to post clear information about their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This will allow parents to know what their rights are what the proper process to file a complaint. This is a practice already done by the Rhode Island Department of Education, and EOHHS should follow the same standard.

¹ <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2025/04/10/metro/ri-early-intervention-waitlist-significantly-reduced/#:~:text=Related:%20Infants%2C%20toddlers%20face%20long,%E2%80%A2%20STEPH%20MACHADO/GL OBE%20STAFF>

² https://eohhs.ri.gov/consumer/families-children/early-intervention-program/early-intervention-data-dashboard/#:~:text=The%20Early%20Intervention%20Demand%20and%20Children%20Who,currently%20not%20evaluated%20within%2045%20days**%20102.3