



Testimony Re: Senate Bill 2785: Early Intervention Funding and Data Dashboard
Senate Education Committee
April 29, 2026
Michaela Carroll, MPH, Senior Policy Associate for Early Childhood Education, Development, & Health



Rhode Island KIDS COUNT coordinates the Right from the Start Campaign, a state policy coalition led by eight organizations to advance state policies and budget priorities that help babies and young children get off to the right start.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the Right from the Start Campaign would like to voice their strong support for Senate Bill 2785. This bill would increase Medicaid rates for Early Intervention Services to 100% of the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner's recommended rate increase, the first scheduled rate increase based on a new statutory rate review. It would also require the state to continue updating the Early Intervention data dashboard with information about the waiting list and staff vacancies and update the Early Intervention statute with current information.

Rhode Island's Early Intervention program provides special education services to infants and toddlers who have developmental delays or disabilities. It can [help children](#) with speaking and communicating with speech-language therapy, hearing, daily activities (occupational therapy) and moving their bodies (physical therapy). Early Intervention is a [required service](#) under the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. [About one-third of infants and toddlers who received high-quality Early Intervention Services no longer had a developmental delay, disability, or special education need in kindergarten.](#)

Rhode Island's Early Intervention program experienced major financial and staffing problems between 2020 and 2024 after 20 years of frozen Medicaid rates. In 2021, Rhode Island established a waiting list for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities who needed services. Since then, the General Assembly enacted two rate increases and allocated temporary ARPA funding to Early Intervention. As of 2025, enrollment in Rhode Island's Early Intervention program and our child outcomes have rebounded but remains below 2019 levels. **Rhode Island's Early Intervention Program continues to have a ["needs assistance" federal designation.](#)**

As of January 2026, there were 134 infants and toddlers who had been waiting more than 45 days for services. **The average wait time was 102.3 days for this group of children.**

Thank you for the leadership that the General Assembly has shown on Early Intervention. We urge you to pass Senate Bill 2785 to ensure that all Rhode Island children have access to timely Early Intervention services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Fund Early Intervention 2026
H-7127 FY27 EOHHS Budget
[H-7586](#) (Cotter) & [S-2785](#) (Valverde)

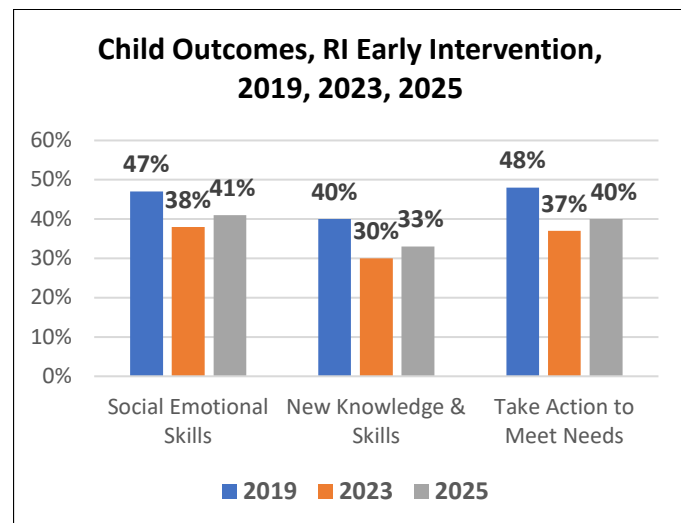
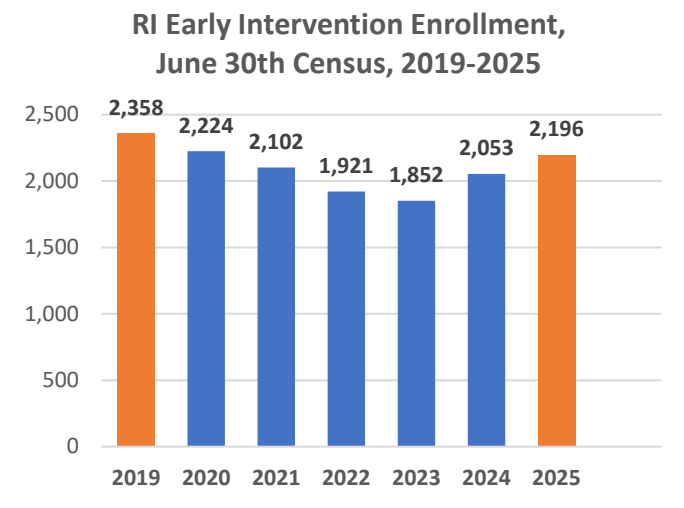


Right from the Start

Rhode Island’s Early Intervention program provides special education services to infants and toddlers who have **developmental delays or disabilities**. Early Intervention is required under the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*.

Researchers have found that **about one-third of infants and toddlers who received high-quality Early Intervention services no longer had a developmental delay, disability, or special education need** in kindergarten.

Rhode Island’s Early Intervention program experienced major financial and staffing problems from 2020-2024 following 20 years of frozen Medicaid rates. In 2021, the state established a waiting list, limiting access for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities. Since then, the General Assembly enacted two rate increases and allocated temporary *ARPA* funding to Early Intervention. As of 2025, the Rhode Island Early Intervention program **enrollment and child outcomes have rebounded but remain below 2019 levels**. The state’s Early Intervention program still has a federal designation of “needs assistance.” As of January 2026, there were 134 infants and toddlers who had been waiting more than 45 days for services. The average wait time was 102.3 days for this group of children.



Invest in Early Intervention 2026:

- 1) Governor McKee’s FY27 budget proposal** includes a Medicaid rate increase for Early Intervention at 50% of the OHIC recommended rate increase.
- 2) Rep. Cotter’s and Sen. Valverde’s bill** proposes a Medicaid rate increase at 100% of the OHIC recommended rate increase, the first scheduled rate increase based on a new statutory rate review. The bill also requires the state to continue updating the [Early Intervention data dashboard](#) with information about the waiting list and staff vacancies and updates the Early Intervention statute with current information.