



RHODE ISLAND  
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND  
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT  
AFL - CIO

To: Senate Education Committee  
From: Jeremy Sencer, RIFTHP Field Representative  
Date: April 29, 2026  
Re: Early Intervention Workforce and Access  
Testimony in **Support of S 2785** (Valverde, et al.)

On behalf of RIFTHP, I submit testimony in support of S 2785, legislation that protects children and early intervention providers by strengthening workforce capacity and ensuring timely access to critical developmental services.

Rhode Island's early intervention system is essential to supporting infants and toddlers with developmental delays, yet persistent workforce shortages have created unacceptable delays in care. Due to years of inadequate Medicaid reimbursement rates, providers have struggled to recruit and retain qualified staff, resulting in waitlists and missed opportunities during the most critical period of child development. Families continue to face delays beyond federally required timelines, undermining both equity and outcomes.

S 2785 directly addresses these challenges by requiring targeted Medicaid rate increases based on the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner's recommendations. By investing in the workforce, the bill helps ensure that providers can offer competitive wages and maintain sufficient staffing levels to meet demand. The bill also strengthens transparency through public reporting of wait times and workforce data, which is critical for accountability and ongoing system improvement.

From our experience representing healthcare professionals and service providers, workforce stability is the foundation of any effective public system. Early intervention professionals—including therapists, educators, and coordinators—are highly skilled workers whose compensation must reflect the importance of their role. Without sustained investment, staffing shortages will persist, and children will continue to experience delays that have lifelong consequences.

For these reasons, RIFTHP urges the Committee to support S 2785.

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