



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

To: Senate Education Committee
From: Jeremy Sencer, RIFTHP Field Representative
Date: May 6, 2026
Re: Early Childhood Education Access
Testimony in **Support of S 3077** (Gallo, et al.)

On behalf of RIFTHP, I submit testimony in support of S 3077, legislation that expands access to voluntary, free, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs for three and four-year-old children across Rhode Island.

Rhode Island families continue to face significant barriers to accessing affordable early childhood education. Too many students enter kindergarten already behind in language development, early literacy, social-emotional growth, and foundational learning skills because they lacked access to high-quality early learning opportunities. These gaps disproportionately impact working families, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and communities with fewer economic resources.

S 3077 strengthens Rhode Island's commitment to educational equity by explicitly expanding support for both three and four-year-old pre-kindergarten programs within the state education funding framework. The legislation also promotes stronger coordination between the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Human Services to improve access, alignment, and implementation. Expanding high-quality early childhood education is one of the most effective long-term investments Rhode Island can make in student success.

RIFTHP members who work in schools and early childhood settings understand firsthand the impact early intervention and early learning supports have on long-term educational outcomes. Students who have access to strong early childhood programs are more likely to demonstrate school readiness, stronger attendance, improved literacy development, and greater long-term academic success. High-quality pre-kindergarten programs also provide important support for working families and strengthen the broader public education system.

Importantly, expanding access must also include sustained investment in the educators and school professionals who make these programs successful. High-quality pre-kindergarten requires qualified educators, manageable class sizes, developmentally appropriate supports, and stable long-term funding. Rhode Island should continue building a coordinated early childhood system that values educators as professionals while ensuring programs remain accessible and equitable for families.

For these reasons, RIFTHP urges the Committee to support S 3077.

356 SMITH STREET PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02908-3761 (401) 273-9800 FAX (401) 331-8815

• **Maribeth K. Calabro**, President • **Maria Manzi**, Executive Assistant • **Bridget McDonough**, Administrative Assistant •
• **Michael J. Mullane**, Field Representative • **James A. Parisi**, Field Representative •
• **Christopher Lambert**, Field Representative • **Jeremy Sencer**, Field Representative •
• **Sean Doyle**, Field Representative •