



April 13, 2026

Chairman Louis DiPalma
Senate Finance Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H7127, Governor's FY 2027, FY 2026 Revised and Capital Budgets, Department of Health

Dear Chairman DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Fiona Nicholson, and I am the Program Director for the Healthy Families America (HFA) program at Family Service of Rhode Island. I write today to urge you to ensure that Rhode Island meets the state funding matching requirements for the federal Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funds to draw down federal funds so that high-quality home visiting programs such as HFA are offered to all families who could benefit.

HFA is an evidence-based, long term home visiting program that is designed to support families who may have experienced trauma, are facing challenges or stressors, or other adverse experiences in their lives. HFA serves prenatal women and families with infants up to the age of 5 years old. HFA is the signature program of Prevent Child Abuse America and is designed to provide support to our vulnerable families. In 2025 FSRI HFA program served 198 families with 3,440 visits; 95% were low-income families.

HFA offers support to new parents navigating the joys and struggles of parenthood. HFA provides services for prenatal moms, supports bonding and attachment with newborns, offers child development information and activities, and makes referrals to community resources. It also promotes safe sleep for infants to reduce risk of SIDS. HFA's approach is strength-based, culturally respectful, and family-centered. HFA children show enhanced cognitive development and have fewer behavior problems. HFA parents are more confident in their parenting role and build a strong lifelong bond with their child. We see the difference we make in the lives of families every day.

We thank you for securing \$409,765 to draw down \$1,229,295. Since 2021, the number of RI families enrolled in evidence-based family home visiting programs has dropped by 32 % due to inadequate staffing and financing causing many programs to close. FY27, we urge Rhode Island to make the full \$537,000 investment in general funds required to receive the \$1.6 million match to fund these vital programs. This relatively small investment will ensure we can meet the federal match and help ensure babies and young children in Rhode Island get the support they need to thrive. We also hope you will work to guarantee that RIDOH allocates these federal funds in a flexible way to support the current families and communities these programs serve.

Sincerely,

Fiona Nicholson
HFA Director at Family Service of Rhode Island