



FEDERAL HILL HOUSE

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May 5, 2026

To: RI State Senate - Finance Committee
From: Kimberly Fernandez, Executive Director, Federal Hill House
RE: Support for Senator Vargas's Child Care is Essential Bill (S2667)

Federal Hill House (FHH) strongly supports the Child Care is Essential Bill (S2667). Our mission is to help neighbors in Federal Hill, Olneyville, and surrounding community thrive, at every stage of life -- and access to affordable, high-quality child care is central to that goal.

FHH operates an Early Learning Center with six classrooms serving up to 70 children ages six weeks to five years, along with an active after-school program. Eighty-five percent of our families rely on state child care assistance, including those involved with DCYF, kinship care, and reunification programs, as well as working families whose wages alone cannot cover the cost of care.

Child care is essential infrastructure. Parents need it to work. Children need it to learn and grow. Educators deserve living wages. Providers must be able to sustain operations without sacrificing quality or relying on fundraising to stay afloat.

This bill takes important steps by:

- Aligning and strengthening state law governing the Child Care Assistance Program
- Expanding eligibility so more families can access care
- Updating reimbursement rates to meet federal equal access standards
- Addressing Rhode Island's critical infant care shortage

The need is urgent. This legislation will ease the financial burden on families while stabilizing and strengthening the child care system that prepares Rhode Island's youngest residents for the future. Every day, we see children arrive at our center whose families depend on this support to work and thrive.

Thank you for your consideration. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and can be reached at 401-421-4722 or kfernandez@federalhillhouse.org.



Sincerely,

Kimberly Fernandez *Pamela Romero* *Christina Loureiro*

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