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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

**TESTIMONY ON 26-S 2834,
AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- MATERNAL AND CHILD
HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS --
EARLY INTERVENTION EXTENSION--BRIDGE TO PRESCHOOL
May 5, 2026**

The American Civil Liberties Union of Rhode Island supports this legislation, which would eliminate a gap in special education services for preschool children.

Our organization has long recognized the importance of special education for the youngest Rhode Islanders. In July 2023, we filed a class-action lawsuit, *PLEE v. Providence Public School Department*, to require the Providence Public School Department to timely provide special education services for preschool students ages 3 to 5 as the law required.

Because school for many preschool students does not start until September, preschool students who turn 3 before then often lose early childhood intervention services for months before they start preschool special education services. This bill would end that gap in services and ensure that students continue getting early intervention services until preschool services start in September.

Continuous special education/early intervention services are extremely useful for students, and gaps in services can lead to regression and stagnation. We therefore urge the committee to support this bill.

Thank you for considering our views.