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May 4, 2026

The Honorable Louis DiPalma  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony in **SUPPORT** of S2834

Chair Donovan:

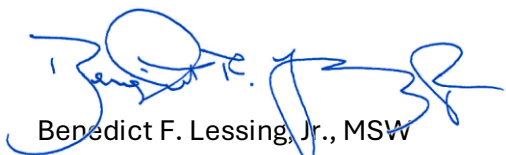
We write in **support** of S2834, an act which would give eligible families the opportunity to extend Early Intervention (EI) services until the September after a child's third birthday, to reduce gaps in services and promote smooth transitions into school-based special education services. Under current law, Rhode Island's EI program ends on a child's third birthday, at which point school districts become responsible for providing special education services to eligible children. This is challenging because schools typically work on school year calendars, and school-based services are not always available immediately when a child turns three, especially if the child has a spring or summer birthday. We often see gaps in services for children transitioning from EI to school-based special education, and these gaps could be avoided if families had the option to extend EI until the start of the next school year.

Community Care Alliance has decades of history as a provider in the Rhode Island Early Intervention system with a demonstrated commitment to maintaining Early Intervention programming as part of the agency's early childhood service umbrella. We maintain strong partnerships with all the local school systems within our catchment area. We have the capacity to maintain children and families who are turning three in our program to ensure a seamless transition from Early Intervention to their local school department, allowing critical services and developmental progress to not be disrupted during the school break.

We also appreciate that S834 takes a slow and incremental approach to avoid overloading a fragile provider system too quickly. The proposal includes a nearly two-year planning period, during which the implementation team will meet. This gives the State, providers, school districts, and families the time to develop the capacity and new systems necessary to support this new population of EI recipients after their third birthdays.

Thank you very much for your careful consideration of this bill and our testimony.

Sincerely,



Benedict F. Lessing, Jr., MSW  
President/CEO