

May 5, 2026

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

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of S-2834

Chair DiPalma:

My name is Shannon Dos Santos and I am testifying in support of S-2834, a bill that would allow children to stay in Early Intervention until the September after they turn three. The current Early Intervention system in RI is only required to serve children until they turn 3 and then they are immediately cut off. If children are still eligible for services, they are then supposed to be enrolled in their district's preschool special education program. Currently, finding a placement that meets the needs of these students is extremely difficult and children are losing out on valuable education and therapies, particularly when the child turns 3 after the school year is underway.

This bill would:

- Give families the choice of staying with their EI provider until the start of the school year after the child turns 3;
- Ensure continuity of care for children receiving services; and
- Provides adequate time and support for providers to ensure they are able to serve children past the age of 3.

As a former foster parent (now adoptive parent) and a parent of a child currently receiving EI services, I am in support of this bill for many reasons. Extending Early Intervention services until the September following a child's third birthday is a critical step toward ensuring continuity of care and positive developmental outcomes. The transition out of EI at age three often coincides with significant changes in services, providers, and environments. For many children and families, this abrupt shift can disrupt progress at a time when consistency and stability are essential.

Allowing children to remain in Early Intervention through the summer months also provides a smoother, more developmentally appropriate transition into preschool or other educational settings. It ensures that gains made in communication, motor skills, social-emotional development, and adaptive functioning are not lost during a service gap. This extension is especially important for children in foster care or with developmental delays or disabilities who benefit from consistent therapeutic support.

In addition, families rely on Early Intervention providers not only for direct services, but also for guidance, coordination, and advocacy. Extending eligibility supports families during a critical planning period and helps ensure that appropriate school-based services are in place before the new academic year begins.

Ultimately, this approach aligns with best practices in child development by prioritizing continuity, reducing regression, and supporting children in reaching their full potential. Extending services until September is a practical, child-centered solution that strengthens outcomes for children and families alike.

I urge you to vote in favor of bill S-2834.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify.

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