



5/26/26

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Ditra Edwards, and I write on behalf of SISTA Fire, a grassroots organization based in Rhode Island that builds collective power with women and nonbinary people of color. Many of our members are mothers, caregivers, and low-income families navigating rising costs, unstable housing, low wages, and systems that continue to push families deeper into crisis rather than supporting stability. We strongly support SB-2843.

At SISTA Fire, we spend time listening closely to families across Rhode Island. Through our organizing and story collection, parents consistently describe how impossible it has become to keep up with daily costs while caring for children. Families are making painful choices between food, utilities, transportation, rent, and childcare. In this context, every dollar and every opportunity for long-term stability matters.

This bill takes an important step toward addressing generational poverty and wealth inequality in Rhode Island. Under the bill, before unclaimed property funds are deposited into the state's general fund, the state would first set aside a one-time \$3,000 deposit for each eligible baby born in the previous year whose parent or guardian was enrolled in the RI Works program and deposit those funds into the Rhode Island Baby Bond Trust Act. Remaining funds would continue to flow into the general fund as usual.

This approach creates a pathway for children born into low-income households to access future economic opportunity without relying on taxpayer dollars. It recognizes that wealth inequality begins early and compounds across generations. Families already struggling to meet basic needs should not be denied opportunities to build long-term stability for their children.

For many families in our community, saving money or building generational wealth is nearly impossible while navigating rising rents, low wages, debt, childcare costs, and economic instability. A Baby Bond program creates a concrete investment in children's futures and helps interrupt cycles of poverty. These funds can support future access to education, housing stability, entrepreneurship, and other opportunities that strengthen long-term economic security.

We support this bill because it reflects a broader vision of economic justice rooted in dignity, opportunity, and collective responsibility. Rhode Island has an opportunity to invest in children

who have historically been excluded from wealth-building opportunities while using an existing revenue source rather than creating new taxes.

Families across Rhode Island are already doing everything they can to survive and care for their children. This bill recognizes that all children deserve a meaningful opportunity to build a stable future.

We urge the committee to support this Senate bill-2843, and move Rhode Island toward a more just and family-centered approach to economic security.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ditra Edwards
Co-Founder and Executive Director
SISTA Fire