



May 5, 2026

Chairman DiPalma
Senate Finance Committee
State of Rhode Island General Assembly

Re: Support of the Family Visiting bill S2845

Dear Chairman and members of the Committee,

My name is Debra Quinton, and I am an RN and the Director of the First Connections Program at Family Service of RI. I am writing regarding the Department of Health's FY'27 proposed Budget and the important need to adequately fund the State's First Connections Program. I request that the Department of Health designates funding to support the First Connections Program to ensure the continued critical work we do for RI families.

Our program is the state's child find entity for Early Intervention, and the short term, immediate response program to connect families prenatally and with children under the age of 3 years old. We thank you for securing \$409,765 to draw down \$1,229,295. We are requesting that Rhode Island invests \$ 787,000 to receive \$2.36 million in federal funds to fund family visiting programs. This investment is not included in the Governor's proposed FY27 budget. We urge you to pass **S2845** to ensure we can meet the federal match.

First Connections Teams are made up of Pediatric and Perinatal Registered Nurses, Certified Community Health Workers and Social Workers. Interventions include finding children who have not returned to their pediatrician, conducting safety assessments of family homes including lead, asthma, and fire risks and conducting developmental screenings for every child under the age of 3 who has touched the DCYF system.

In 2025, we received more than 4000 referrals. My dedicated team outreached and serviced many of these babies and their families assisting them with support and overall health education to reduce maltreatment and neglect. I urge you to support our critical work by establishing dedicated funding within the RIDOH annual budget.

Thank you for your support.

Debra Quinton RN, CLC
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FSRI First Connections Program Director