



To: Senate Committee on Finance

From: RI Association for Infant Mental Health (RIAIMH), Leanne Barrett, Executive Director

Date: May 5, 2026

Subject: Support for S-2845 (Valverde), *RI Family Home Visiting Act*

RIAIMH is a non-profit professional membership organization that works to ensure all infants and young children in RI thrive and have strong, positive, responsive relationships with their parents and other caregivers. RIAIMH has been an active member of the Right from the Start Campaign's Steering Committee since its inception.

We are writing to support passage of S-2845, which would update the RI Family Home Visiting Act to include Rhode Island's long-standing First Connections newborn home visiting program in the statute, increase the Medicaid rates to levels recommended in OHIC's September 2025 report, and require the state fund the minimum state match each year to bring in all available federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funds.

The state has been forfeiting far too much federal MIECHV funding and the number of children and families who can participate in these proven programs has fallen substantially in recent years. Since 2021, the number of Rhode Island families served by the First Connections rapid response program has fallen by 51% and the number of families enrolled in an evidence-based family home visiting program (Parents as Teachers or Healthy Families America) has fallen by 32%.

The mental health of young children depends on consistent and nurturing relationships with parents. Family home visiting programs help support parents to foster secure parent-child relationships, enhance caregiver capacity (including attending to maternal mental health needs and supports), and reduce stress. These evidence-based programs offer tailored support to strengthen mental health, decrease child maltreatment, and improve long-term behavioral health outcomes for children and adults.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. We are thankful for your continued leadership on issues related to babies, young children, and family well-being in Rhode Island.