

May 18, 2026

Dear Chair DiPalma and Members of the Senate Committee on Finance,

Thank you for your service and dedication to your local constituents and residents across RI. I am writing to express my strong support for Joint Resolution **S 3083- Making an Appropriation to the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program**, submitted on 3/13/26 by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo. My name is Erin Manchester and I am a licensed pediatric occupational therapist who has worked in the RI Auditory Oral Program (RIAOP) for the past 18 years. I have witnessed the profound changes this program has made on the lives of students with hearing loss and their families.

Created by RIDE in 2005, the mission of RIAOP is “to prepare children with hearing loss for successful inclusion and full participation in their community schools by providing the necessary skills to empower families with the knowledge and confidence necessary to support their children in their lifelong journeys.” RIAOP provides equitable access to specialized instruction to students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH) and utilize cochlear implants and/or hearing aid technology to access spoken language. RIAOP provides services across RI including early intervention, an in-house program at an elementary school in Foster, RI, and K-12 outreach services to 150 students in their local school districts. This funding will directly support the mission of RIAOP, ensuring equity and continued access to this critical program for students with hearing loss throughout RI.

I respectfully urge you to support this resolution and approve the proposed appropriation to the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

***E. Manchester***

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