

5/18/2026

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

I am writing to express **my strong support** for **Joint Resolution S3083**, which appropriates funding for the Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program (RIAOP). I respectfully urge the Committee to consider that this funding be provided in a manner that allows for the RIAOP to continue receiving annual support beyond the 2026-2027 school year.

The Rhode Island Auditory Oral Program is a crucial statewide educational program whose mission is “To prepare children with hearing loss for an education in their community schools by providing them with the tools they will need for successful inclusion and achievement, while striving to empower their families with the knowledge and confidence necessary to support their children in their lifelong journeys.”

As a Middle School Counselor served by the RIAOP, I have seen firsthand the meaningful impact this program has on children, families and educators in Cranston, Rhode Island. For the past 6 years I have worked directly with Sarah Rosendale, the Director of RIAOP, as I have had several students who required Hearing Aids and the use of Hearing Assistive Technology Systems. These systems allow students to thrive in the regular education classroom with minimal support. Although the technology is incredible when it is working, it sometimes breaks down from wear and tear or because of user error. As a result, I have had to schedule many emergency Google Meets with Sarah Rosendale and the student so we could troubleshoot what was wrong with the system. Most of the time, Sarah and the student could fix the glitch. However, when they were not successful, Sarah would help us get a new or temporary device quickly while the old one was repaired. If we did not have that support, there is no one in our building with that expertise, so I do not know how we could serve that student.

Not only does the Rhode Island Auditory Program staff help us navigate the HATS technology, they also participate in our annual 504 and IEP Meetings. This is extremely helpful for the student and staff as the RIAOP representative explains how a specific hearing challenge impacts the student in various settings within the public school (i.e. the classroom, the gym, the cafeteria, a music class, on the bus, etc). Regular education teachers and staff are not specifically trained in how to support different auditory challenges, so Sarah and her expert staff help us create accommodations and modifications that level the playing field for our students in all environments so they can thrive.

Finally, RIAOP helps families with additional resources within their communities that support students with hearing loss. There are times when a student's hearing changes or there are new challenges with maturity, our RIAOP representatives are able to help parents find the resources that improve the lives of our students in school and in the community. I do not know who could fill that void if they are no longer supporting us.

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

Sincerely,  
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