



April 28, 2026

Chairman Marvin Abney
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: In support of Rep McNamara's H8163, Focused on Pre-K Expansion

Dear Chair Abney and members of the Committee,

We write in support of Representative McNamara's bill H8163, which would help ensure that Rhode Island **expands prekindergarten in a way that is consistent with the state's broader early education goals**. Importantly, the bill recognizes that Rhode Island's public prekindergarten system is built on a mixed-delivery model and that Head Start, child care providers, and other community-based early learning programs are critical partners in that system.

For over 190 years, Children's Friend has worked to advance the well-being and healthy development of the youngest and most vulnerable children in Rhode Island. Today, alongside our permanency, home visiting, child care, Head Start, and nutrition services, we provide high-quality prekindergarten education to more than 200 four-year-olds in our state-funded Pre-K classrooms. For the families we serve—most of whom are living below the federal poverty level—our Pre-K, child care, and Head Start classrooms are a lifeline that enables parents to work and build a better future for their children.

As Rhode Island continues to expand access to prekindergarten, it is essential that new investments build on the strengths of the state's existing mixed-delivery approach. Some families are best served in school-based classrooms, while others benefit most from trusted community-based settings that offer continuity, flexibility, and comprehensive supports. Head Start is especially important because it combines early education with family engagement, developmental supports, and health and nutrition services that many children and families need to thrive.

Children's Friend supports expanding prekindergarten opportunities through both the state-managed RI Pre-K model and the federally funded Head Start model so that Rhode Island can move toward serving at least 70 percent of all three- and four-year-olds in high-quality programs. **Expansion should strengthen family choice, preserve a diverse delivery system, and ensure that public investments reach the children and communities with the greatest need.**

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Thank you for your time and review of this testimony, and for your continued efforts to support the children who are the future of our State. If you have further questions or need any additional information, please contact me at dcaprio@cfsri.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Caprio", written over a light blue horizontal line.

David Caprio
President and CEO