

# 2025 Legislative Priorities



## Sustain and Strengthen Early Education and Child Care

Children's Friend provides an array of early education and early child care options for families including Early Head Start, Head Start, Child Care, and Pre-K. We have served over 1,469 children so far in 2024 at one of our 13 licensed early childhood centers. We have a waitlist for these programs, primarily due to our inability to hire enough staff. We urge the state to invest in child care reimbursement rates and strategies to invest in our early education workforce.

- **(H5196 Diaz / S100 DiMario)** Continue the Child Care for Child Care Educators program
- **(H5200 Donovan / S673 Urso)** Pass the Early Educator Workforce Act
- **(H5197 Diaz / S62 DiMario)** Streamline Access to the Child Care Assistance Program
- **(H5281 Diaz/ S240 Vargas)** Child Care is Essential
- **(H5199 McNamara/ S394 Gallo)** Establish Pre-K implementation and expansion guidelines, including a infant/toddler set-aside

## Explore Ways to Fund and Sustain Family Home Visiting

At Children's Friend, we serve 925 families in our First Connections, Healthy Families America and Nurse Family Partnership home visiting programs. The state has changed the funding model, so these programs are primarily paid for by fee-for-service Medicaid, making it extremely difficult for us to cover the costs of these lifesaving programs. Rhode Island must be creative – as other states have been – in funding home visiting programs to ensure their ongoing sustainability.



- **(H5164 Carson/ S231 Valverde)** Support the establishment of an IDEA Task Force bill
- **(H6073 Giraldo/ S677 Valverde)** Invest state funding to draw down federal funds for home visiting and re-visit Medicaid strategy to support proven, multi-year, consistent, relationship-based programs



## Improve the RI Works Cash Assistance Program

Children's Friend supports increasing cash assistance benefits annually and aligning them with the federal poverty limit, ensuring no child lives in deep poverty. Additionally, measures should be taken to protect vulnerable children from losing their benefits if their parent loses eligibility due to immigration status.

- **(H5992 Handy / S568 Murray)** Improve the RI Works Cash Assistance Program