



Children's FRIEND

Making a difference...
one child at a time.



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David Caprio

CONTACT

153 Summer Street

Providence, RI 02903

401.276.4300.p

401.331.3285.f

401.729.5899.tdd

childrensfriendri.org



April 30, 2024

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

Re: In support of Representative Donovan's H7336, The Office of Early
Childhood Development and Learning

Dear Chair Abney and members of the Finance Committee,

We write in support of Representative Donovan's bill to create a new Office of
Early Childhood Development and Learning.

As you know, the General Assembly requested, and the Administration lead a
process last year resulting in the "Early Childhood Governance Systems
Analysis" report released in December 2023. After participating in this process
and reviewing the final report, Children's Friend believes that a new cabinet-
level state agency of Early Childhood Services is needed to properly invest,
coordinate, manage, and be accountable for services which result in better long-
term outcomes for our kids, families, and our State. This bill would create such
an agency and we urge the General Assembly to consider doing so.

We will note that while the Working Group on Early Childhood Governance
did not recommend the creation of the new cabinet-level agency, there are
many positive recommendations contained in their report on next steps. These
recommendations can help move our early childhood system forward even in
the absence of a new agency.

The recommended improvements in areas including data coordination and data
driven decision making, role clarity in State agencies, coordinated budgeting
and financial analysis, and a "no wrong door" approach to services, can all help
to move the system forward now.

To achieve the possible positive impacts, these recommendations must be
embraced by our Legislative and Executive leaders. If the General Assembly
does not pass Rep Donovan's bill, we hope the General Assembly will continue
to monitor the work of the agencies involved and encourage collaboration
between the agencies and an open transparent process as the work moves
forward.

Another bill by Representative Caldwell, H7934, would require ongoing
attention to the report recommendations and we hope you will consider passing
that resolution, if not this one.



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With new research documenting that high quality and effective early childhood services produce positive impacts which last for at least two generations, now is the time for Rhode Island to "up-its-game" and ensure our early learning programs and systems are coordinated, efficient and effective.

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 that reads "David Caprio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Caprio
President & CEO