

Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
Thursday, March 5, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is David Caprio, and I am the President and CEO of Children's Friend.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Article 15, Sections 9 and 10, in the Governor's proposed 2021 Budget.

The change in Section 9 will allow low-income families who are enrolled in a RI public institution of higher education to access the child care assistance program, if needed.

This change will provide the children with access to a safe and high quality early learning program and the many long-term benefits that come from that access.

This change will also help support parents in furthering their education, enhancing their economic self-sufficiency, and improving their ability to provide a stronger and more stable family environment for the long term for their children.

The change in Section 10 would provide a much needed increase in the rates paid to providers serving children in the Child Care Assistance Program.

As a provider of early childhood services in Rhode Island, including serving children through the Child Care Assistance Program, I strongly support the needed increase in rates paid through this program.

These rate increases are tied to quality tiers, so they continue to support and incentivize child care providers to improve quality.

Research at a national level has shown that state investments in high-quality early childhood programs are some of the best financial

investments that a state can make in terms of return on investment. Research has documented annual rates of return as high as 13% for investments made in high-quality early education.

New research just released last year related to the Perry Preschool Project, a well known national study on the impact of high-quality early childhood services, documents substantial second generation positive effects on education, health, employment, and crime.

Finally, there was a hearing last night in the House Committee on Health, Education, and Welfare regarding a task force to find solutions to the low salaries earned by those in the early childhood field.

Increasing the rates paid through the Child Care Assistance Program is one step in the right direction. While increasing these rates alone will not solve the entire salary problem, this increase and needed continued increases in these rates can be part of the solution.

In summary, increasing the rates paid through the Child Care Assistance Program and keeping them tied to quality tiers is a great investment of State resources, and will have positive impacts on children, their families, and the early childhood workforce.

Thank you for your time and attention. I urge you to support these budget articles.