



Children's FRIEND

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



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childrensfriendri.org



March 15, 2023

Chairman Marvin Abney
House Finance Committee
RI State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony Regarding the Governor's FY2024 Budget vis a vis DOH

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee,

Our testimony today concerns the Governor's FY2024 proposed budget related to the Department of Health. We were extremely disappointed that the Governor's budget did not recommend a permanent rate increase for the home visiting programs run by the Department. **We strongly encourage you to include a permanent rate increase for the First Connections home visiting program in your final budget.**

For 189 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, nutrition services, childcare, Head Start, and Pre-k programs, we are one of five Rhode Island agencies that run a First Connections program.

First Connections, a newborn home visiting program funded through the Department of Health, hasn't had a permanent rate increase in 22 years. Last year, the General Assembly used ARPA funds to provide a temporary rate increase which allowed us to continue to provide the services to families this year. However, without a permanent increase, our ability to provide this service will be in jeopardy. The program costs much more than the current rates and is not sustainable without increased state funding.

First Connections connects new moms with a nurse or social worker immediately after she returns home from the hospital. This important program helps support mom and new baby to promote self-sufficiency and prevent child abuse and neglect. Many of the families with whom we work are earning less than the federal poverty level. This program helps them start parenting on the right foot, and ensures that both mother and child can access health, mental health, and early learning services to make certain that the child is able to grow and thrive. We urge you to invest in a permanent reimbursement rate increase so we can continue to meet our families' needs.



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

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 extending to the right.

David Caprio
President and CEO