

March 21, 2023

Chairman Ryan Pearson  
Senate Finance Committee  
RI State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony regarding the Governor's FY2024 Budget vis a vis DHS

Dear Chairman Pearson and members of the committee,

Our testimony today concerns the Governor's FY2024 proposed budget for the Department of Human Services. We were very disappointed that the Governor's budget did not recommend increased investments in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) or Head Start. We strongly encourage you to make significant investments in both programs to shore up the early learning system here in Rhode Island.

For 189 years, we at Children's Friend have 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, and nutrition services, we provide high quality care to hundreds of families at our 13 licensed early childhood centers across Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls, which have earned 3, 4, or 5 stars on the BrightStars Quality Rating System.

We also serve over 600 three and four-year-old children in our Head Start and Early Head Start programs. For the families with whom we work, most earning less than the federal poverty level, child care and Head Start are a lifeline enabling them to go to work each day and strive for a better future for their children.

While we appreciate your investments last year in the CCAP program, including increasing the income eligibility limit and raising reimbursement rates, we urge you to do more. We continue to face a significant staffing crisis and find ourselves unable to keep all our classrooms open due to our inability to staff those classrooms adequately. This is not about need or interest of families – we have waitlists. These classrooms are closed because we do not have enough staff.

We urge you to invest in reimbursement rates, invest state dollars in Head Start seats, and help us fund increased teacher salaries so we can open our classrooms and meet our families' needs. Legislation will be before you later this session by Senators Cano, Gallo, and DiMario with solid proposals that we urge you to support.

The state's investment in child care has dropped significantly in the last 18 years both for child care and Head Start. In FY2005, General Revenue spending in child care was \$56.2 million compared to FY2023's \$8.7 million, a reduction of \$ 47.5 million. For Head Start, the state has reduced General Revenue spending by \$1.9 million over that same time (from \$3.1 to \$1.2 million). Now, a time with increased need by our children who have been negatively impacted by COVID-19, is not the time to continue underinvesting in them.

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 additional information, please contact me at [dcaprio@cfsri.org](mailto:dcaprio@cfsri.org).

Sincerely,



David Caprio  
President and CEO



# Children's FRIEND

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



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#### CONTACT

153 Summer Street  
Providence, RI 02903

401.276.4300.p

401.331.3285.f

401.729.5899.tdd

[childrensfriendri.org](http://childrensfriendri.org)

