

Prevent Closure of High-Quality RI Pre-K, and Head Start, and Early Head Start Classrooms in Rhode Island 2023

[H-6009](#) (McNamara) & [S-463](#) (Gallo)

H-5200 Governor’s Budget Proposal, RI Pre-K



Right from the Start

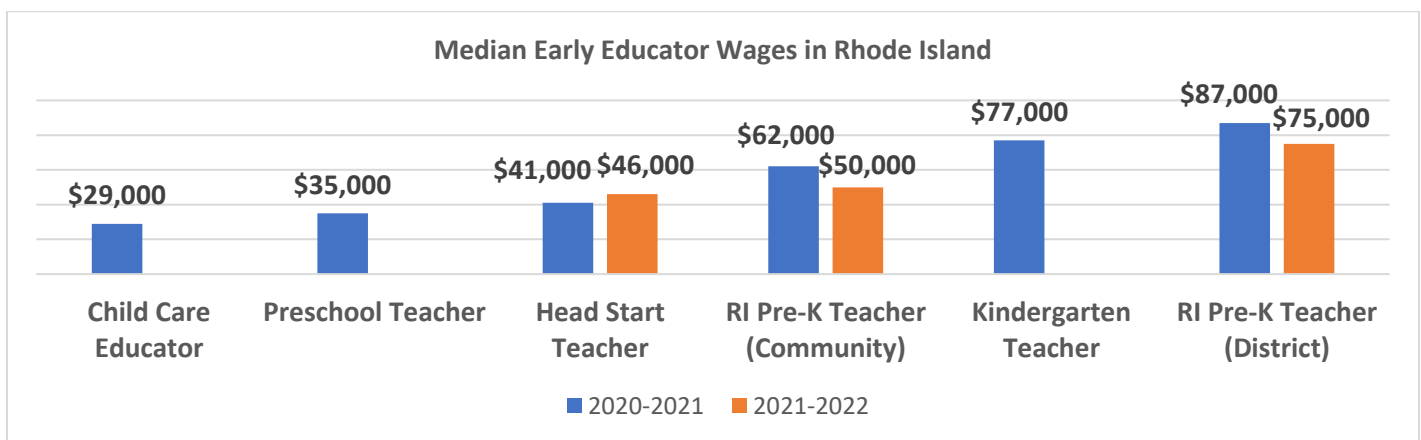
Legislation will allocate sufficient resources to ensure **all RI Pre-K classrooms, Head Start classrooms and Early Head Start classrooms continue operating for the 2023-2024 school year.** Classroom educators will be paid competitive wages comparable to similarly qualified K-12 educators. **In addition, the bill will require the state to revise the Pre-K expansion plan** to 1) include the Head Start model, 2) set spending benchmarks to sustain and expand access to high-quality infant/toddler early care and education (including Early Head Start), 3) include high-quality family child care options in RI Pre-K expansion, and 4) ensure that all families, including those who have children with developmental delays and disabilities, can make choices among high-quality preschool options to include those located outside of their city/town of residence.

Due to expiring and insufficient funding and an ongoing staffing crisis related to inadequate and noncompetitive compensation for teachers, **there are 40 RI Pre-K classrooms, 30 Head Start classrooms, and 11 Early Head Start classrooms at risk of permanent closure on or before July 2023.** Permanent closure of these classrooms would result in a loss of 1,428 high-quality early childhood education seats for children from birth to five (800 RI Pre-K, 540 Head Start, and 88 Early Head Start).

RI Pre-K, Head Start, and Early Head Start are all essential, high-quality programs that help children build skills needed to succeed in school and life. The RI Pre-K program is recognized nationally as a high-quality state preschool program. Rhode Island Head Start classrooms meet or exceed federal Head Start Performance Standards and provide wrap-around comprehensive services to entire families. RI Pre-K, Head Start, and Early Head Start all produce improvements in children’s learning and development.

Despite long waiting lists of low-income children who need services, 30 Head Start and 11 Early Head Start classrooms are currently closed due to an inability to find qualified educators willing to work for the wages offered. The federal government has offered grantees the ability to renegotiate their contracts, permanently closing classrooms and eliminating funded slots so that resources can be directed toward increasing compensation for Early Head Start and Head Start teachers to staff a smaller number of classrooms.

Low & Noncompetitive Wages Drive Early Childhood Teacher Shortages & Cause Classroom Closures



Sources Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Wage Estimates for RI, Federal Office of Head Start, Program Information Reports, and National Institute for Early Education Research.

RI Pre-K, Head Start, and Early Head Start

Any reduction of RI Pre-K slots, Head Start slots, or Early Head Start slots is a step in the wrong direction for Rhode Island.

RI Pre-K	Head Start	Early Head Start
Launched in 2009	Launched in 1965	Launched in 1995
State managed contracts with programs. State funded and managed quality assurance, improvement, and fiscal accountability systems.	Federally managed contracts with programs. Federally funded and managed quality assurance, improvement, and fiscal accountability systems.	Federally managed contracts with programs. Federally funded and managed quality assurance, improvement, and fiscal accountability systems.
\$14.9 million in state funding \$7 million in federal funding <i>expiring in 2023</i>	\$1.1 million in state funding (cuts made in 2008 reduced state funding by 60%) \$21.4 million in federal funding	\$0 in state funding \$8.9 million in federal funding
Serves 2,300 four-year-olds (253 dually enrolled in Head Start)	Serves 1,250 three- and four-year-olds (253 dually enrolled in RI Pre-K) – <i>under enrolled due to closed classrooms (inability to hire and retain qualified staff due to noncompetitive wages)</i>	Serves 155 infants and toddlers in Early Head Start classrooms – <i>under enrolled due to closed classrooms (inability to hire and retain qualified staff due to noncompetitive wages)</i>
127 classrooms operated by Head Start agencies (40%), child care programs (33%), and public schools (27%). Located 18 communities across the state,	108 classrooms operated serving children statewide by 6 federally contracted agencies in RI (Children’s Friend, CHILD Inc., Comprehensive Community Action Program, East Bay Community Action Program, Tri-County Community Action, Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association)	40 classrooms serving children in 22 communities operated by 5 federally contracted agencies in RI (Children’s Friend, CHILD Inc., Comprehensive Community Action Program, East Bay Community Action Program, Tri-County Community Action)
Children: improved language, literacy, and math skills with biggest gains among low-income participants (narrows achievement gap by 75%).	Children: Improved language, literacy and math skills and positive social-emotional development. More likely to graduate from high school, attend college, earn post-secondary degree/credential.	Children: Significant cognitive, language and social-emotional gains. Fewer child welfare encounters. Families: Improved mental health, economic security, and parenting skills.

State Funding for Child Care and Head Start Has Been Cut while RI Pre-K Funding Has Increased

