



# Children's FRIEND

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



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May 3, 2023

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

### Re: In support of Representative Casimiro's bill H5094

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the Committee,

We write in strong support of Representative Casimiro's bill to address the early educator workforce staffing crisis in Rhode Island.

For 189 years, we at Children's Friend have worked to advance the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's youngest and most vulnerable children. Today, alongside our permanency and nutrition services, we provide vital early learning programs across the birth to five (5) continua, including family home visiting, early intervention, Early Head Start, Head Start, childcare, and Pre-K. For the families with whom we work, over 90% are earning less than the federal poverty level. Our family home visiting and early intervention programs help ensure that children and families start off on the right foot. Our Pre-K, childcare, and Head Start classrooms are a lifeline that enables parents to go to work each day and strive for a better future for their children.

As Rhode Island rebuilds from the COVID-19 pandemic, we are seeing increased need for these programs and children with greater challenges. At the same time, we are facing a significant staffing crisis in all of these programs. Due to years of underinvestment in these programs by the State, we need help to hire and retain nurses, physical therapists, assistants, and teachers.

Representative Casimiro's bill would systemically address this crisis by requiring the Children's Cabinet to establish cross-departmental goals and wage benchmarks. This would help current staff but also help build a pipeline of interested candidates who will be able to see these jobs as a career. This bill would also fund a wage supplement program to encourage current staff to remain in the field and require annual reporting on the early learning workforce so that we are able to see areas for improvement.

We urge you to pass this bill – the staffing crisis is not showing signs of lessening, and our children deserve to have access to the services and support we want to be able to provide.



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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Caprio".

David Caprio  
President and CEO