

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

May 4, 2023

RE: In support of Representative Giraldo's bill, the RI Family Home Visiting Act

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the Committee,

My name is Michele and I live in Pawtucket and am a constituent of Representative Felix. I write in strong support of Representative Giraldo's bill to increase funding for the First Connections program.

I have used the First Connections program twice in my life – first as a young mother with my daughter and later as a grandmother. I credit the nurse with First Connections with saving my daughter's life 35 years ago. When my daughter came home from the hospital, she had underdeveloped lungs and was very jaundiced and the nurse helped get her the help I didn't know she needed.

Now, I'm a grandmother to ten wonderful kids – three of whom my husband and I are raising because my daughter, who was a domestic violence victim, was unable to care for them. We took over custody of my youngest grandchildren, Blue, when he was three months old.

At that time, Children's Friend connected me with a First Connections nurse who visited us at our home. Blue, at three months, was very hard to calm and struggled without his mom around.

Nyla, the First Connections nurse was wonderful – she came in and was very helpful in working with Blue on massage therapy and teaching us the skills and strategies to work with him. The strategies worked and we were able to calm him and make him much more comfortable - which helped us all.

Nyla also referred Blue to Ealy Intervention services which helped him thrive, and then Head Start. Blue is now about to graduate from Head Start.

First Connections was just the start of a number of services we've received from Children's Friend that have been so helpful to Blue and our other grandchildren.

I'm not sure what we would have done without the help of Nyla when Blue came to live with us. This First Connections program is so important and I hope it can continue so other families can benefit from it.

Please pass Rep Giraldo's bill so that other families are able to benefit from this extremely important program.

Thank you,  
Michele Holderman  
128 Fuller Street  
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