

Advocacy Priorities

Children's Friend is calling for investments in First Connections, Early Interventions, Head Start, and the Child Care Assistance program.

1

RI CHILD CARE IS ESSENTIAL ACT

(H5193 Diaz/S522 Cano): This legislation will restore \$48 million in state funding and use \$4 million in new federal funding to ensure that all families at or below the State Median Income can receive help paying for child care; all provider rates for the RI Child Care Assistance Program meet or exceed federal standards; and the outdated and inequitable child support enforcement requirement is removed.

2

PREVENT PERMANENT CLOSURE OF ANY RI PRE-K, HEAD START, OR EARLY HEAD START CLASSROOMS

(H6009 McNamara/S463 Gallo & Governor's Budget Proposal): Legislation will restore and provide state funding for Head Start and Early Head Start programs statewide while also investing \$7 million to sustain the RI Pre-K program. It will also increase teaching staff wages to match similarly qualified K-12 teacher wages.

3

INVEST IN THE FIRST CONNECTIONS FAMILY HOME VISITING PROGRAM

(H5810 Giraldo/S207 Valverde): Legislation will make the long-needed (22 years!) rate increase permanent for the Rhode Island First Connections newborn home visiting program to prevent program collapse. This bill will also develop a plan to sustain and expand voluntary family home visiting services, including meeting the new state funding requirements, so that high-quality programs are offered to all families who could benefit.

4

RI EARLY EDUCATOR INVESTMENT ACT

(H5094 Casimiro/S492 Cano & H6169 Diaz/S377 DiMario): Legislation will establish statewide compensation goals for early educators; fund the Child Care WAGES pilot program to increase compensation for skilled child care educators; and implement Kentucky's strategy to recruit and retain child care educators by providing free child care for all child care educators. The workforce that supports young children's early learning and development is made up almost exclusively of women (and disproportionately women of color) and has among the lowest wages in the state.

5

LOAN RELIEF FOR EARLY INTERVENTION

(H5983 Giraldo/S523 Gallo) The Early Intervention program (EI) provides screening and supports for children aged 0-3 with developmental delays. EI providers struggle to hire and retain the needed specialists – speech language pathologists, occupational therapist and physical therapists – to work with the children in the program. Legislation specifies that 10 of the Wavemaker loan forgiveness awards will go to professionals in these fields who stay in their EI program for a period of time.

6

HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED PROVIDERS RATE INCREASE

(H5987 Casimiro/S782 DiPalma): Legislation would increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for human service programs by 10%. These rate increases attempt to address the human services staffing crisis by ensuring a permanent rate increase in programs including Early Intervention and Project Connect.

For more information about our priorities or to read testimony visit

www.cfsri.org/advocacy