

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



Rhode Island Chapter

Testimony in Support of H7291, the RI Early Child Care and Education Workforce Data Act

February 7th, 2024,

Dear Chairperson McNamara and Members of the Committee,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, Rhode Island Chapter (RIAAP), unconditionally supports H7291, the RI Early Child Care and Education Workforce Data Act.

Over the past two decades, Rhode Island has lagged behind the rest of the country in providing quality childcare and education for our youngest citizens. Poor pay rates for childcare workers have created a situation where many of the workers that we count on to care for and nurture our children cannot afford to live in the communities where they work, or to afford childcare for their own children if they have any. Skilled early childhood specialists that provide early intervention and pre-Kindergarten services went decades without a substantive pay raise, which left us with an inadequate workforce...before the COVID 19 pandemic made the situation significantly worse.

As a practicing pediatrician, I see the effects of these deficits every day. Parents struggle to find adequate daycare for their children, so choose to stay at home instead. Children who have developmental needs like language or gross motor delay either have delayed treatment or go without treatment altogether. Many of these children enter kindergarten unprepared to learn, and unnecessarily use up the limited resources of our school departments.

The RI Early Child Care and Education Workforce Data Act is an overdue first step in rebuilding a system of early child care and education in Rhode Island. We need this piece of infrastructure as a foundation and resource to identify our strengths which we can build on and expose the gaps that we need to fill to meet the needs of the children that will be filling our schools, and ultimately our workforce in the future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory Fox".

Gregory Fox, MD, FAAP
Past President, Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
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