

# American Academy of Pediatrics

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## Rhode Island Chapter

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### **Testimony in Support of Bill H5164**

Dear Chairman McNamara and members of the committee,

I am writing on the behalf of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to express our support of H5164, a bill that would create a Task Force to create a comprehensive plan to provide quality early childhood education and support to some of Rhode Island's most vulnerable citizens, young children with special needs.

Recent Medicaid rate increases have begun to address the Early Intervention staffing crisis, but Rhode Island still struggles to recruit and retain qualified Early Intervention staff, and there is still a significant waiting list for children to receive services. As a pediatrician who refers to early intervention every day, I struggle to guide families on where to call, and find families on multiple waiting lists simultaneously in an effort to get their child the services they require. This inefficiency creates an unnecessary administrative burden for both EI providers, families, and pediatricians, and ultimately hurts children.

This problem needs a coherent long-term solution. The children that we let down with little to no services over the past few years are now entering our already strapped school systems, unprepared to learn and taking resources away from every one of their peers.

Rhode Island is blessed to have incredible talent in education, child advocacy, and early childhood development that have skill sets and ideas that can turn this situation around. Let's get them together so they can get to work on the next generation of Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Gregory Fox, MD, FAAP

Chairman, Advocacy Committee

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