



Alex Moore, Political Director  
SEIU 1199NE  
319 Broadway  
Providence, RI 02909

May 6, 2024

Subject: Full Support for Making H-7123 Permanent: Child Care for Child Care Educators Program

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of SEIU 1199NE, representing thousands of healthcare, service, and child care workers throughout Rhode Island, I am writing to express our full support for Representative Grace Diaz's bill, H-7123. This crucial legislation seeks to make the Child Care for Child Care Educators program a permanent fixture in our state, following its successful pilot phase initiated by Speaker Shekarchi as part of the FY24 budget.

This innovative program was launched in August 2024 and is based on a successful model from Kentucky, designed to address the ongoing staffing crisis in child care and early education sectors. The program has rapidly demonstrated its efficacy, garnering national attention and marking Rhode Island as a leader in proactive childcare solutions. As of March 2024, almost half of the licensed child care centers in Rhode Island reported that at least one of their staff members was benefiting from this program.

The proposed bill, H-7123, aims to make several vital enhancements:

- **Permanency:** Ensuring the program's continuation indefinitely, providing stability and assurance to current and future childcare workers.
- **Inclusivity:** Removing the family income limit, which aligns with the successful Kentucky model, thereby broadening the eligibility to encompass more childcare staff who need this support.
- **Expansion to Early Intervention:** Extending eligibility to frontline staff in Early Intervention programs, which currently face significant staffing shortages and a waiting list of 623 infants and toddlers with developmental challenges as of February 2024.

It is widely acknowledged that 9 out of 10 families in Rhode Island struggle with the high costs of quality childcare. By supporting our childcare workforce through programs like H-7123, we directly enhance the quality of care our children receive and enable these essential workers to perform their roles without the added stress of financial instability or lack of access to childcare for their own families.

We strongly urge you to pass H-7123 and make these necessary and impactful changes permanent. Doing so not only supports our childcare workers but also represents a significant step forward in our commitment to the well-being and development of Rhode Island's youngest residents.

Thank you for considering our steadfast support for this pivotal legislation. We look forward to its passage and the continued success of our childcare educators and the families they serve.

Sincerely,

Alex Moore