

Testimony in Support of *H 7123*  
Child Care for Child Care Staff Pilot  
House Committee on Finance  
May 9, 2024  
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**The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports Representative Diaz's *H 7123* which would eliminate the sunset on the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) for Child Care Staff pilot program. The bill would also remove the family income limit to help more staff, include Early Intervention staff in the program, and require an annual report.**

Rhode Island families and children deserve access to high-quality, affordable child care, and our economy cannot run without it. Unfortunately, Rhode Island has been experiencing a staffing crisis (also known as a staffing exodus) in the early education workforce. This staffing crisis/exodus is primarily due to the fact that early educators do very difficult work for near minimum wages. The early child care workforce primarily consists of working mothers who cannot afford to send their own children to child care programs. Often, when an early educator has their first or second child, they are financially forced to leave the workforce – taking their years of experience with them. This pilot program was created to address these workforce and staffing concerns by incentivizing workers and reducing the financial burden of their child care expenses.

As of March 2024, almost half of the licensed child care centers in Rhode Island had at least one staff member participating in this pilot program, and there are 475 children benefiting from this pilot program.<sup>1</sup> This program has been incredibly successful in retaining and recruiting high quality staff at child care centers. *H 7123* also seeks to expand this program to include Early Intervention staff. Since 2019 there has been a 21% decrease in the number of children receiving Early Intervention (EI) services – due largely to staffing shortages and long waitlists. Including EI staff in this program could make it possible for more EI staff to enter and remain in the workforce – and accordingly, for more children to have access to critical EI services.

Representative Diaz's *H 7123* creates a sustainable and resilient child care system and expands critical supports for the RI economy and the parents and workers make it run. The Economic Progress Institute urges passage.

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<sup>1</sup> [RI Early Learning Council Slides, p. 27](#)