



★ WORKING FAMILIES POWER ★

Representative Marvin Abney, Chair

House Finance Committee

May 9, 2024

Support for H-7547 – Rhode Island Child Care for All Act

Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee,

Rhode Island Working Families Power writes in strong support of H-7547, Rep. Cherie Cruz' bill to expand child care assistance to families and funding for child care educators and providers throughout the state. Working Families Power advocates for policies that promote economic justice and allow all people to meet their basic needs and live with dignity, which this bill would help promote.

Most families in Rhode Island struggle to find affordable, quality child care, even as child care providers struggle to make a living wage and leave the field. Too often child care is patchy, unaffordable, or out of reach for families. At the same time, early educators don't make a living wage, and providers struggle to stay in business. The system is broken. Fixing it will have huge benefits for families, workers, and our economy as a whole.

This bill would expand child care assistance to more than 90% of Rhode Island families. Starting with the lowest income families, this bill gradually but dramatically expands the number of families who are eligible for assistance until we reach the goal of child care that is affordable for every single family. Child care costs for Rhode Island families would be capped at 7% of household income — much less than the current 23% of income the average RI household is currently paying for child care. Families making <\$40k/year wouldn't have to pay anything for child care, and co-pays would slowly rise with income.

Even though child care tuition is too high for families, tuition payments alone do not allow for high quality care and decent wages. This bill creates annual grants for child care providers to make up that gap. It also provides additional funding for infant care and non-traditional hour care. It also requires early educators to receive wages on par with public school teachers with similar credentials and creates a task force to set wages, which would then be funded through the annual grants to child care providers

We hope the committee will move forward with this legislation so that it can be enacted into law.

Thank you,

Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler

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Rhode Island Working Families Power