



# Children's FRIEND

Making a difference...  
one child at a time.



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May 09, 2024

Chairman Marvin Abney  
House Finance Committee  
RI State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony regarding Representative Handy's bill, H7686

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

We are writing in support of Representative Handy's bill which will make important improvements to the Rhode Island Works program.

For 190 years, Children's Friend has worked to advance the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's youngest and most vulnerable children. We provide services including Early Head Start, Head Start, WIC, adoption, foster care, help for families with substance abuse, counseling, assistance for children with developmental delays, and other child welfare and early childhood services across Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls. Almost 90% of the more than 30,000 individuals we serve earn less than the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and many receive Rhode Island Works.

Too many of our families struggle to pay their rent and meet their basic needs. RI Works is a piece of the puzzle of support for the State's poorest children. Children need consistency to thrive, and ensuring families have adequate RI Works benefits coming in regularly can help stabilize things so they can focus on early learning, permanency programs or counseling services they may need.

Our families are struggling. We are seeing increased economic instability, stress and children with great needs. The State should focus increased resources on programs that help shore up the safety net and help our youngest children start on the right path. We urge you to pass this bill.

Thank you for your time and review of this testimony, and for your continued efforts to support the children who are the future of our State. If you have further questions or need any additional information, please contact me at [dcaprio@cfsri.org](mailto:dcaprio@cfsri.org).

Sincerely,

David Caprio  
President & CEO