

To: House Finance Committee

From: Rebecca Silver, PhD

Date: 3/25/25

Re: Opposition for H-5076, DOH BUDGET

My name is Rebecca Silver. I am a resident of Providence and am a licensed psychologist specializing in infant and early childhood mental health. Given my many roles within the infant and early childhood service delivery system (e.g., therapist, mental health consultant, professional development provider, researcher, program director), I know firsthand that we need a strong and coordinated continuum of infant and early childhood services. The Rhode Island Family Visiting Network is a critical piece of this continuum, providing evidence-based family visiting programs to our state's most vulnerable families. I therefore support the Right from the Start Campaign's **opposition to the RI Department of Health's proposed FY26 budget**, which does not include general revenue to meet the state match requirement to draw down all the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting funding available.

Exclusion of the \$356,000 in state match funding in the RI Department of Health's (RIDOH) proposed budget will lead to a loss of an additional \$1.1 million in federal funding (for a total loss of ~1.4 million) for these proven programs. In 2024, Rhode Island was one of only three states and territories that did not meet the full state match for the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funding to deliver voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs for expectant and new parents living in communities that are at-risk for poor maternal and child health outcomes. This is shortsighted because (a) evidence-based family home visiting programs are proven to reduce incidences of child abuse and neglect, improve birth outcomes, improve school readiness, and improve maternal education and (b) they can produce a \$1.75 to \$5.70 return on investment for every dollar spent due to reduced costs of child protection, K-12 special education, and criminal justice expenses. Gaining access to the full federal funding available will lead to a more sustainable Rhode Island Family Visiting Network, a critical piece of the early childhood service delivery continuum.

Thank you for reviewing my testimony and my recommendation to **oppose the RI Department of Health's proposed FY26 budget**.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Silver, PhD