

Cranston Public Schools

Building Cranston's Future One Child at a Time

845 Park Avenue
Cranston, Rhode Island 02910-2790

April 24, 2025

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
RI State House of Representatives
By Email To: HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov

Re: **URGENT: Support** for H-5462 (Extension Option for Early Intervention)

Dear Chairman Abney:

We write in **support of H-5462**, an act which would give eligible families the opportunity to extend Early Intervention (EI) services until the September after a child's third birthday, to reduce gaps in services and promote smooth transitions into school-based special education services. Under current law, Rhode Island's EI program ends on a child's third birthday, at which point school districts become responsible for providing special education services to eligible children. This is challenging because schools typically work on school year calendars, and school-based services are not always available immediately when a child turns three, especially if the child has a spring or summer birthday. We often see gaps in services for children transitioning from EI to school-based special education, and these gaps could be avoided if families had the option to extend EI until the start of the next school year. Six other states and Washington DC all have federally-supported policies in place that allow families to extend Early Intervention after a child's third birthday.

As the Executive Director of Pupil Personnel Services and past Director of Early Childhood for Cranston Public Schools, I have worked closely with EI systems to ensure our students receive the support they require on their third birthday. It is at this time of year we become **increasingly concerned** for our EI children. Many of these children have a 2 ½ month of no service as school will end prior to their 3rd birthday. How unfair, that during the most crucial time in a child's development, services end. In addition, when thinking about all preschoolers, it is challenging when the classroom has started, children are progressing then a new student begins. The new student now has to adjust to so many things: school bus, school building, some first time away from parents etc. They do not understand what is going on and are trying to learn the classroom routines while others have already learnt them. Many times we see our students withdraw or cry, as they do not understand. Our educators are always concerned that they will have slower progress.

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Title II & Title IX Coordinator of Employment
Michael F. Crudale
Chief Human Resources Officer

504 Coordinator
Norma Cole
Assistant Superintendent

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As an administrator it is very challenging to fill our classroom with appropriately certified staff, when we truly do not know exactly how many we need. How many classrooms will we fill by the end of the school year? Many years we end up having to open a new classroom in January. This is not only challenging in regards to finding staff but also around budget.

I also appreciate that S-247 takes a slow and incremental approach to avoid overloading a fragile provider system too quickly. However, if at all possible to have a shorter roll-out strategy this would give the students and families the support they need throughout their early childhood years.

Thank you very much for your careful consideration of this bill and our testimony.

Sincerely,

Michele A. Simpson

Michele A. Simpson
Executive Director of
Pupil Personnel Services

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