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April 9, 2024

Chairwoman Donovan
House Health and Human Services Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: In support of Representative Caldwell's Resolution, H7934 re Early Childhood Governance

Dear Chair Donovan and members of the HHS Committee,

We write in strong support of the Rep Caldwell's resolution requesting the Children's Cabinet hold an open meeting before September 2024 to review progress on recommendations of the Early Childhood Governance Task Force.

We thank the General Assembly for requesting and the Administration for leading the process resulting in "Early Childhood Governance Systems Analysis" released in December 2023. Children's Friend believes that a new cabinet-level state agency of Early Childhood Services is needed to properly invest, coordinate, manage, and be accountable for services which result in better long-term outcomes for our kids, families, and our State.

While we are disappointed that the Working Group on Early Childhood Governance did not recommend the creation of the new cabinet-level agency, there are many positive recommendations contained in their report. These recommendations can help move our early childhood system forward.

The recommended improvements in areas including data coordination and data driven decision making, role clarity in State agencies, coordinated budgeting and financial analysis, and a "no wrong door" approach to services, can all help to move the system forward now, in the interim.

To achieve the possible positive impacts, these recommendations must be embraced by our Legislative and Executive leaders. We hope this resolution will encourage collaboration between the agencies and an open transparent process as the work moves forward.

With new research documenting that high quality and effective early childhood services produce positive impacts which last for at least two generations, now is the time for Rhode Island to "up-its-game" and ensure our early learning programs and systems are coordinated, efficient and effective.

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.

Sincerely,

David Caprio
President and CEO