



## Top Early Childhood Priorities for the FY27 Governor's Budget Proposal

September 2025

[Right from the Start](#) is a legislative and budget campaign led by eight organizations to advance state policies that help ensure all babies and young children get off to the right start in life, regardless of family income, race, ethnicity, immigration status, or zip code. Recent policy and budget wins have helped Rhode Island maintain a strong footing as a great place to have a baby and raise young children, but we still lag behind nearby states and face increased challenges ahead.

### Early Care & Education

**Increase Child Care Assistance Program Rates (DHS):** As the state minimum wage increases, **increase provider rates for the RI Child Care Assistance Program to the federal equal access benchmark** (75<sup>th</sup> percentile of the 2024 Rhode Island Child Care Market Rate Survey) using general revenue or available federal funds. Providers need more funding to meet new minimum wage requirements, offer competitive wages to retain qualified staff, and keep classrooms open. The average hourly wage for a child care teacher in Rhode Island is \$16.74.

**Invest in RI Pre-K and Head Start with 30% for Infants/Toddlers (RIDE & DHS):** **Invest \$2.1 million to preserve and expand access to free, high-quality public preschool options for three- and four-year-olds (Head Start & RI Pre-K) and \$900,000 to promote access to high-quality infant and toddler early care and education.** As outlined in the 2022 Rhode Island Pre-K Plan, update the Early Childhood Categorical in the school funding formula statute to specify that 30% of new state funds allocated will be transferred to the Department of Human Services and used to preserve and sustain the Head Start program for three- and four-year-olds and improve access to Early Head Start and high-quality infant and toddler care.

### Health & Development\*

**Fund Family Home Visiting (DOH and EOHHS):** Invest at least \$535,000 to **meet the state match needed to receive \$1.6 million in additional federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting funds.** Rhode Island is one of only a handful of states that has not been meeting the federal match requirement, leaving federal funds on the table. **Fully fund the RI Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner's recommended Medicaid rate increase for family home visiting programs.** Since 2021, the number of families enrolled in an evidence-based family home visiting program has dropped by 37% and the number of families receiving a First Connections vits has dropped by 42%.

**Increase Early Intervention Rates (EOHHS):** **Fully fund the RI Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner's recommended Medicaid rate increases for Early Intervention services** for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities. Medicaid rate increases enacted in 2022 and 2024 have dramatically reduced the EI waiting list caused by 20 years of frozen rates, but as of July 2025, there were still 145 infants and toddlers on the waiting list. Without regular rate adjustments, financing and staffing challenges will worsen and cause more service delays and disruptions.

**Increase Pediatric Primary Care Rates (EOHHS):** Address the pediatric primary care shortage by providing a 10% Medicaid rate increase while the comprehensive rate review is underway. Rhode Island's Medicaid rates for pediatric primary care are at least 30% below the rates in Massachusetts. Pediatric primary care providers did not receive a Medicaid rate adjustment in the FY26 budget.

## Family Economic Security

**Expand Family Tax Credits (DOR):** Increase Rhode Island's refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for low- and moderate-income working families from 16% to 20% of the federal credit. Both Massachusetts and Connecticut offer 40% of the federal credit. And/or, create a permanent refundable state Child Tax Credit at \$250/child similar to [Governor McKee's 2022 one-time child tax rebate](#) for low- and moderate-income families.

**Raise General Revenue (DOR):** Pass Revenue for Rhode Islanders, increasing taxes on high earners in the state to generate state revenue needed to shore up health care, food, and child care systems and put more money in the pockets of families with young children. Health care, food, housing, utility, and child care costs continue to skyrocket. Looming federal budget cuts will destabilize state services that families depend on to raise children. The number of millionaires in Massachusetts grew almost 40% even after their millionaires tax passed – generating [nearly \\$3 billion in new state funds](#) for the state.

\* Not listed as a budget priority for FY27 because we are assuming that sufficient state funding will continue for the MomsPRN program and be allocated to continue the PediPRN program in the proposed FY27 state budget using a small portion of the new health care assessment. Maintaining our commitment to mental health care for mothers and children should be a top priority.

### Right from the Start Steering Committee

Beautiful Beginnings  
Economic Progress Institute  
Latino Policy Institute  
Parents Leading for Educational Equity  
Rhode Island Association for Infant Mental Health  
Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children  
Rhode Island Head Start Association  
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT