

Testimony in Support of HB-7794
Rhode Island Family Home Visiting
House Committee on Finance
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The Economic Progress Institute supports Representative Giraldo's HB-7794, which would establish First Connections in statute, implement Medicaid rate increases, update state reporting, and meet the state match to bring in federal Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funding.

Rhode Island parents and babies deserve to have the support they need to have healthy outcomes. Over 6,000 Rhode Island children are born at risk for poor developmental outcomes, who could be served by Family Home Visiting programs. **In 2025, MIECHV programs served approximately 1,230 children.**¹ First Connections and the Family Home Visiting system provide free, essential services for Rhode Island's families with newborns. Family home visitors provide services and assistance to the state's most vulnerable families. Family Visiting in Rhode Island pairs expectant and new parents and families with a nurse, social worker, early childhood specialist, or community health worker, who provides support and resources to improve the family's health, education, and social-emotional health outcomes.² The program provides critical and reliable services in helping families meet their basic needs, and long-term support to address housing, behavioral health, and child care needs. These are evidence-based, comprehensive programs that serve the whole family.

As of October 2024, states are required to contribute non-federal funds as a state match to access all available federal funds for MIECHV programs. For every \$1 provided by the state, Rhode Island would receive \$3 in federal funds.³ Rhode Island would need to allocate \$787,000 in a state match to receive almost \$2.3 million in federal funding. **These federal funds would aid in stabilizing and expanding the Family Home Visiting workforce and maximizing services to vulnerable families and children.** Since 2021, there has been a 32% decrease in the number of Rhode Island families participating in family home visiting services - from 1,317 to 897 families - due in part to increased financial and staffing challenges. If Rhode Island does not invest in the state match, these programs will continue to be scaled back significantly, to the detriment of our children and families. Families enrolled in evidence-based home visiting have lower rates of preterm births and investigations for child maltreatment once enrolled. Additionally, utilizing family visiting services is proven to reduce the likelihood of future

¹ [Family Visiting Legislative Report, 2026](#)

² [Family Visiting Legislative Report, 2024](#)

³ [MIECHV Program Reauthorization, Health Resources and Services Administration.](#)

engagement in state or federally funded public benefit programs, thus being a cost-effective program.

Funding for Rhode Island's Family Home Visiting system is not only a sound investment, but also a commitment to the state's frontline workforce and to the well-being of our families with newborns. The Economic Progress Institute recommends additional state funding for Family Home Visiting.