

Testimony in Support of SB-254
Health Care for Children and Pregnant Women
Senate Committee on Finance
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The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports Senator Lauria’s SB-254, which provides children, from birth through age three, with continuous coverage eligibility for RItE Track/RItE Care so that they are not at risk of losing health coverage at the yearly redetermination due solely to administrative barriers.

Rhode Island’s young children deserve access to health care. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Rhode Islanders receiving Medicaid/Medicare had continuous enrollment which ensured stable health coverage and reduced the rate of churn, which is the temporary loss of coverage when disenrolled and then re-enrolled within a short period of time due to administrative barriers or temporary income fluctuations.¹ Research also shows that “churning” on and off insurance disproportionately affects people of color.² In Rhode Island, over half of babies and young children are covered under Medicaid; but as of January 2024, Rhode Island only provides 12-months of continuous Medicare and Medicaid coverage for children under the age of 19.³

As of October 2024, twelve states and the District of Columbia have approved federal waivers or are in the process of developing waivers to implement multi-year continuous eligibility for young children.⁴ This is part of a growing national movement to ensure that our country’s youngest children have access to reliable health coverage, while also promoting health equity and efficient healthcare spending.

Rhode Island should join the national movement in stabilizing access to health care for infants and toddlers and lead this charge for the New England region. The Economic Progress Institute urges passage.

¹ [Implications of Continuous Eligibility Policies for Children’s Medicaid Enrollment Churn, KFF](#)

² [States Are Adopting New Policies to Help Children Stay Enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP, The Commonwealth Fund](#)

³ [Continuous Eligibility for Children, EOHHS State Plan Amendment](#)

⁴ [Medicaid and CHIP Eligibility Expansions and Coverage Changes for Children Since the Start of the Pandemic, KFF](#)