

Testimony in Support of *HB-7320*

Removing Child Support Enforcement Mandate from the Child Care Assistance Program

House Committee on Finance

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The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports Representative Diaz’s HB-7320, which removes the requirement that families consent to and cooperate with the Department of Human Services in establishing paternity and enforcing child and medical support orders as a condition of eligibility for childcare assistance.

Rhode Island families and children deserve access to high-quality, affordable child care, and our economy cannot run without it. The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) helps working families pay for child care. It is a critical program that enables low- and moderate-income families to participate in the workforce and/or attend vocational training or higher education. However, too many vulnerable families are being excluded from CCAP due to the child support enforcement mandate. Rhode Island is **one of only nine states** that mandate establishing a child support order as a condition of receiving Child Care Assistance (CCAP). No other education program – Pre-K or K-12 education – has this requirement, nor do other work supports like SNAP. This requirement is antiquated, often creates unnecessary and lasting turmoil between co-parents, and is not in the best interest of the child. Removing the child support requirement could also save the state money by reducing the administrative costs associated with establishing paternity and enforcing child support orders through the court system. It is time to eliminate this costly barrier to affordable child care.

Rhode Island’s child support cooperation mandate for CCAP prevents and deters single-parent households from accessing the affordable child care they need. Our economy needs families to get back to work – we should make sure that accessing child care is as easy as possible so that families can do just that. The Economic Progress Institute strongly urges passage.