Testimony in support of SB-377
Senate Committee on Finance
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The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports Senator DiMario’s SB-377, which would allow all staff and employees of child care providers to be eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and end the child support enforcement mandate so that more families are able to benefit from CCAP.

Rhode Island is facing a staffing crisis in the early educator workforce. It has left more than 1,000 young children and families without access to affordable, quality child care due to the closures of dozens of Head State, Early Head Start, and Pre-K classrooms. The early child care workforce primarily consists of working mothers who cannot afford to send their own children to child care programs.

SB-377’s categorical CCAP eligibility for the early educator workforce would supplement the low compensation for early childhood educators, enable them to afford childcare for their own children, and allow more of them to enter the workforce. It would also benefit child care and early learning programs by supporting the recruitment and retention of their staff. Categorical eligibility has also been shown to increase the number of childcare programs that accept subsidies.

Rhode Island is one of only 13 states that requires the custodial parent to start a child support order as a condition of receiving child care subsidies. No other education programs – pre-K, K-12 education – have this requirement, nor do other work supports like SNAP. This mandate deters vulnerable and otherwise eligible families from applying to the program as it often creates unnecessary and lasting turmoil between co-parents. This requirement is antiquated, and it is time to eliminate it. 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.

Senator DiMario’s SB-377 would address significant staffing issues in the early child care workforce and aid in building a sustainable and resilient child care system for Rhode Island.