Testimony for SB-207  
Senate Committee on Finance  
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The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports Senator Valverde’s SB-207, which would make permanent the FY23 Medicaid rate increase for the First Connections family home visiting program. This bill would also mandate the state to develop a plan to sustain and expand the family home-visiting program to serve all families statewide and meet the federal funding match requirements.

Family home visiting maintained services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic because they are an important resource for vulnerable families. 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. Participating in the program is proven to improve child and family outcomes.

Families enrolled in evidence-based home visiting have lower rates of preterm births and investigations for child maltreatment once enrolled. Utilizing family visiting services is proven to reduce the likelihood of future engagement in state or federally funded public benefit programs. Investing in home visiting now would generate long-term positive returns, saving the state money in the future.

Prior to the temporary Medicaid rate increase in 2022, the First Connections program was operating at a loss, which significantly limited services for Rhode Island’s most vulnerable children and families.

The Rhode Island Family Home-Visiting Act is a commitment to the state’s frontline home visiting program that provides critical services for our families with newborns.