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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2017

J O I N T R E S O L U T I O N

**CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY AN EARLY
INTERVENTION SYSTEM FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN IN RHODE
ISLAND**

Introduced By: Senators Archambault, Satchell, Miller, Sosnowski, and Calkin

Date Introduced: March 29, 2017

Referred To: Senate Health & Human Services

1 WHEREAS, Rhode Island is the first state in the nation to mandate that a universal
2 newborn hearing screening be provided to infants before they are discharged from the hospital;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, Parents learn that their child is either deaf or hard of hearing through this
5 screening and follow-up appointment with their audiologist to confirm a diagnosis of deafness;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, After parents learn of their child's diagnosis of deafness confirmed by their
8 audiologist, they should receive the early intervention services as early as possible; and

9 WHEREAS, A wealth of scholarly research on early language acquisition shows that
10 children who are deaf and hard of hearing have the same learning abilities as those children who
11 are hearing when provided with early language exposure; and

12 WHEREAS, Parents of deaf and hard of hearing children deserve to receive adequate
13 resources to support their child's language and modality development as early as possible; and

14 WHEREAS, The Rhode Island Department of Education and the Early Intervention
15 Program under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services do not have ready and
16 appropriate resources to support parents' Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) in a timely
17 manner; and

18 WHEREAS, The Rhode Island Department of Education and the Early Intervention
19 Program under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services have not been able to produce

1 data results for supports and improvements that children who are deaf or hard of hearing need for
2 tracking purposes to enhance their programs, services, and expectations/milestones; and

3 WHEREAS, The Rhode Island Department of Education and the Early Intervention
4 Program under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services do not have language
5 acquisition tools to ensure that children's language(s) is acquired at the age appropriate level
6 among a general population in both American Sign Language, and English or one of these
7 languages (American Sign Language or English), or other language that is used in any approved
8 early childhood educational programs by the Rhode Island Department of Education; and

9 WHEREAS, The Rhode Island Department of Education and the Early Intervention
10 Program under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services need to create a clear
11 partnership in collaboration and commitment to create resources and/or to update their resources
12 to meet parents' and children's needs for language acquisition and modality development, and to
13 ensure that the transition from the early intervention program to a pre-school program is smooth
14 and efficient; and

15 WHEREAS, Each early intervention center in Rhode Island is operating its programs and
16 services independently. The availability of resources specifically for parents whose child is deaf
17 or hard of hearing varies between the centers. The factsheets and information may be shared with
18 parents and shall dispel any myths and misinformation about language acquisition and
19 development; and

20 WHEREAS, There is no provision or preventive measure to detect children who
21 experience hearing loss after the universal newborn hearing screening exam was passed until the
22 age of three (3); now, therefore be it

23 RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission be and the same is hereby created
24 consisting of twenty-four (24) members: three (3) of whom shall be members of the Senate, not
25 more than two (2) from the same political party, to be appointed by the President of the Senate;
26 three (3) of whom shall be members of the House of Representatives, not more than two (2) from
27 the same political party, to be appointed by the Speaker of House; one of whom shall be an
28 otolaryngologist, to be appointed by the President of the Rhode Island Medical Society; one of
29 whom shall be the Executive Director of the Rhode Island Parent Information Network, or
30 designee; one of whom shall be the President of the Rhode Island Association of the Deaf, or
31 designee; one of whom shall be the President of the Hearing Loss Association of Rhode Island, or
32 designee; one of whom shall be the Director of the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, or designee;
33 one of whom shall be the Executive Director of the Northern Rhode Island Collaborative, or
34 designee; one of whom shall be an audiologist, to be appointed by the President of the Rhode

1 Island Speech-Language-Hearing Association; one of whom shall be the President of the
2 American Sign Language Teachers Association, or designee; one of whom shall be the Executive
3 Director of the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, or designee; one of
4 whom shall be the Commissioner of the Rhode Island Department of Education, or designee; one
5 of whom shall be the Coordinator of the Rhode Island Early Hearing Detection and Intervention
6 within the Rhode Island Department of Health, to be appointed by the Director of the Rhode
7 Island Department of Health; one of whom shall be the Director of the Rhode Island Hearing
8 Assessment Program, or designee; one of whom shall be a representative of the Early
9 Intervention Center, to be appointed by the President of Family Service of Rhode Island; one of
10 whom shall be the Director of Perspectives Corporation's children program, or designee; one of
11 whom shall be the Director of the Early Intervention program under the Rhode Island Executive
12 Office of Health and Human Services, or designee; one of whom shall be the President of the
13 Rhode Island Chapter of Alexander G. Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, or
14 designee; one of whom shall be a bilingual-bimodal development professional with substantial
15 experience working with deaf and hard of hearing children from homes where American Sign
16 Language and English are not the primary languages used, to be appointed by the Speaker of
17 House; and one of whom shall be a child psychological professional, to be appointed by the
18 President of the Senate.

19 In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a permanent advisory
20 commission, a legislative study commission, or any commission created by a General Assembly
21 resolution, the appointing authority may appoint a member of the general public to serve in lieu
22 of a legislator, provided that the majority leader or the minority leader of the political party which
23 is entitled to the appointment consents to the appointment of the member of the general public.

24 The purpose of said commission shall be as follows:

- 25 • To have a comprehensive study on the early intervention services in Rhode Island
26 specifically for children who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- 27 • To identify the challenges and gaps that parents experience in the first three (3) years
28 of life of children who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- 29 • To identify the gaps of resources including personnel, expertise, professionals, and
30 services for either or both languages of English and American Sign Language and to ensure that
31 visual and audio supplements to either language are available in Rhode Island;
- 32 • To create an effective protocol to ensure that information provided by early
33 intervention professionals is updated and balanced and will be shared with parents;
- 34 • To create or expand a centralized resource for all parents of children who are deaf or

1 hard of hearing; and

2 • To present findings and recommendations for viable solutions concerning parents
3 whose child is deaf or hard of hearing.

4 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet
5 at the call of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House and organize. The
6 President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House shall each select one member to serve as co-
7 chairpersons of the commission.

8 Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original
9 appointment.

10 The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

11 All municipalities, departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and
12 information, documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed
13 necessary or desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

14 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to
15 provide suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and recommendations to
17 the General Assembly on or before February 1, 2018 and said commission shall expire on June
18 30, 2018.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
JOINT RESOLUTION
CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY AN EARLY
INTERVENTION SYSTEM FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN IN RHODE
ISLAND

- 1 This resolution would create a twenty-four (24) member special legislative commission
- 2 whose purpose it would be to make a comprehensive study of an early intervention system for
- 3 deaf or hard of hearing children in Rhode Island, and who would report back to the General
- 4 Assembly on or before February 1, 2018, and said commission would expire on June 30, 2018.

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