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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- RHODE ISLAND CHILDCARE IS ESSENTIAL ACT

Introduced By: Senators Vargas, DiMario, Urso, Murray, and DiPalma

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative findings.

2 (1) Access to affordable, high-quality childcare is essential to support labor force
3 participation of parents with children from infancy through age twelve (12) years and to maximize
4 the economic productivity of the state.

5 (2) Access to affordable, high-quality childcare is essential for all parents to achieve
6 economic security and independence, particularly for mothers who often have lower lifetime
7 earnings because they earn lower wages, work reduced hours, and take longer breaks from work in
8 order to care for children.

9 (3) High-quality childcare programs, staffed by qualified and effective educators, are
10 essential for children to promote healthy development and optimize learning during early childhood
11 and school-age years.

12 (4) A landmark report by the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council found
13 that children begin learning at birth and the adults that provide for the care and education of children
14 bear a great responsibility for their health, development, and learning -- setting the critical
15 foundation for lifelong progress. The report recommends that states work to increase the
16 qualifications and compensation of childcare educators, including those who care for infants and
17 toddlers.

18 (5) Childcare educators are among the lowest paid workers in Rhode Island. In 2024, the
19 median wage of a childcare educator in Rhode Island was sixteen dollars and seventy-four cents

1 (\$16.74) per hour.

2 (6) The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides significant funding to
3 Rhode Island through the Child Care and Development Block Grant and has established clear
4 guidelines for setting rates that provide low-income families with "equal access" to the childcare
5 market as required under federal law. The "equal access" guideline is to pay rates equal to or above
6 the seventy-fifth percentile of a recent market rate survey.

7 (7) The Rhode Island Governor's Workforce Board recommends that Rhode Island pay
8 childcare rates that meet or exceed the equal access standard as a first step to support program
9 quality and to improved wages and retention of child care educators. As of 2025, there were twenty
10 (20) states that met or exceeded the equal access standard, including Massachusetts, New
11 Hampshire, New York and Vermont.

12 (8) The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has also established a clear
13 guideline for determining whether childcare is affordable. Currently, the federal guideline for
14 affordability is that families should pay no more than seven percent (7%) of family income for
15 childcare. Using that guideline, almost all families with young children in the State of Rhode Island
16 need a subsidy to afford the cost of high-quality childcare staffed by qualified, effective, and fairly-
17 compensated educators.

18 (9) The Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant focuses on helping lower income
19 families access childcare, limiting the use of federal funds to families with incomes at or below
20 eighty-five percent (85%) of the state median income and allows states to waive this limit for
21 children who are members of a protected population such as children in foster care. As of 2025,
22 there were fifteen (15) states that set family income eligibility limits at or above eighty-five percent
23 (85%) of state median income, including Maine, New York and Vermont.

24 SECTION 2. Title 40 of the General Laws entitled "HUMAN SERVICES" is hereby
25 amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

26 CHAPTER 6.7

27 RHODE ISLAND CHILDCARE IS ESSENTIAL ACT

28 **40-6.7-1. Childcare assistance -- Families or assistance units eligible.**

29 (a) The department of human services shall provide appropriate childcare to every
30 participant who is eligible for cash assistance and who requires childcare in order to meet the work
31 requirements in accordance with this chapter.

32 (b) Low-income childcare. The department shall provide childcare to all other families with
33 incomes at or below eighty-five percent (85%) of the state median income, the low-income family
34 eligibility benchmark in the federal Childcare and Development Block Grant if, and to the extent,

1 these other families require childcare in order to work at paid employment and/or to participate in
2 training, apprenticeship, internship, on-the-job training, work experience, work immersion, or other
3 job-readiness/job-attachment programs sponsored or funded by the governor's workforce board
4 Rhode Island established pursuant to the provisions of chapter 102 of title 42 or state agencies that
5 are part of the coordinated program system pursuant to § 42-102-11. The department shall also
6 provide childcare assistance to families with incomes below eighty-five percent (85%) of the state
7 median income when such assistance is necessary for a member of these families to enroll or
8 maintain enrollment in a Rhode Island public institution of higher education.

9 (c) No family or assistance unit shall be eligible for childcare assistance under this chapter
10 if the combined value of its liquid resources exceeds one million dollars (\$1,000,000), which
11 corresponds to the amount permitted by the federal government under the state plan and set forth
12 in the administrative rulemaking process by the department. As used in this section "liquid
13 resources" means any interest(s) in property in the form of cash or other financial instruments or
14 accounts that are readily convertible to cash or cash equivalents. These resources include, but are
15 not limited to: cash, bank, credit union, or other financial institution savings, checking, and money
16 market accounts; certificates of deposit or other time deposits; stocks; bonds; mutual funds; and
17 other similar financial instruments or accounts. These resources do not include educational savings
18 accounts, plans, or programs; retirement accounts, plans, or programs; or accounts held jointly with
19 another adult, not including a spouse. The department is authorized to promulgate rules and
20 regulations to determine the ownership and source of the funds in the joint account.

21 (d) As a condition of eligibility for childcare assistance under this chapter, the parent or
22 caretaker relative of the family shall consent to, and shall cooperate with, the department in
23 establishing paternity, and in establishing and/or enforcing child support and medical support
24 orders for any children in the family receiving appropriate child care under this section in
25 accordance with the applicable sections of title 15, as amended, unless the parent or caretaker
26 relative is found to have good cause for refusing to comply with the requirements of this subsection.

27 (e) For purposes of this section, "appropriate childcare" means childcare, including infant,
28 toddler, preschool, nursery school, and school age, that is provided by a person or organization
29 qualified, approved, and authorized to provide the care by the state agency or agencies designated
30 to make the determinations in accordance with the provisions set forth in this section.

31 (f)(1) Families with incomes at or below one hundred percent (100%) of the applicable
32 federal poverty level guidelines shall be provided with free childcare. Families with incomes
33 greater than one hundred percent (100%) of the applicable federal poverty guideline shall be
34 required to pay for some portion of the childcare they receive, according to a sliding-fee scale

1 adopted by the department in the department's rules, not to exceed seven percent (7%) of income
2 as defined in subsection (h) of this section.

3 (2) Families who are receiving childcare assistance and who become ineligible for
4 childcare assistance as a result of their incomes exceeding eighty-five percent (85%) of state
5 median income shall continue to be eligible for childcare assistance until their incomes exceed one
6 hundred percent (100%) of the state median income. To be eligible, the families must continue to
7 pay for some portion of the childcare they receive, as indicated in a sliding-fee scale adopted in the
8 department's rules, not to exceed seven percent (7%) of income as defined in subsection (h) of this
9 section, and in accordance with other eligibility standards.

10 (g) In determining the type of childcare to be provided to a family, the department shall
11 take into account the cost of available childcare options, the suitability of the type of care available
12 for the child; and the parent's preference as to the type of childcare.

13 (h) For purposes of this section, "income" for families receiving cash assistance under §§
14 40-5.2-10(g)(2) and 40-5.2-10(g)(3), and income for other families shall mean gross, earned, and
15 unearned income as determined by departmental regulations.

16 (i) The caseload estimating conference established by chapter 17 of title 35 shall forecast
17 the expenditures for childcare in accordance with the provisions of § 35-17-1.

18 (j) In determining eligibility for childcare assistance for children of members of reserve
19 components called to active duty during a time of conflict, the department shall freeze the family
20 composition and the family income of the reserve component member as it was in the month prior
21 to the month of leaving for active duty. This freeze shall continue until the individual is officially
22 discharged from active duty.

23 (k) Effective from August 1, 2026, through July 31, 2028, the department shall provide
24 funding for childcare for eligible childcare educators, and childcare staff, who work at least twenty
25 (20) hours a week in licensed childcare centers and licensed family childcare homes as defined in
26 the department's rules and regulations. Eligibility is limited to qualifying childcare educators and
27 childcare staff with family incomes up to three hundred percent (300%) of the applicable federal
28 poverty guidelines and will have no copayments. Qualifying participants may select the childcare
29 center or family childcare home for their children. The department shall promulgate regulations
30 necessary to implement this section and will collect applicant and participant data to report
31 estimated demand for state-funded childcare for eligible childcare educators and childcare staff.
32 The report shall be due annually to the governor and the general assembly by November 1.

33 **40-6.7-2. Childcare assistance -- Rates established.**

34 (a) Effective July 1, 2026, the rates to be paid by the department of human services and the

1 department of children, youth and families for licensed childcare centers and family childcare
 2 homes shall be updated to reflect findings from the 2024 Rhode Island childcare market rate survey
 3 and shall be implemented in a tiered manner, reflective of the quality rating the provider has
 4 achieved within the state's quality rating system outlined in § 42-12-23.1. All rates shall meet or
 5 exceed the federal equal access benchmark (seventy-fifth percentile of the most recent Rhode Island
 6 childcare market rate survey) and programs that have achieved a high-quality rating shall be paid
 7 rates at or above the ninetieth percentile of the most recent Rhode Island childcare market rate
 8 survey. Weekly rates shall be paid as follows:

9 LICENSED CHILDCARE CENTERS & FAMILY CHILDCARE HOMES

	<u>Tier One</u>	<u>Tier Two</u>	<u>Tier Three</u>	<u>Tier Four</u>	<u>Tier Five</u>
11 <u>Infant</u>	<u>\$463</u>	<u>\$472</u>	<u>\$482</u>	<u>\$491</u>	<u>\$501</u>
12 <u>Toddler</u>	<u>\$356</u>	<u>\$363</u>	<u>\$371</u>	<u>\$378</u>	<u>\$385</u>
13 <u>Preschool</u>	<u>\$312</u>	<u>\$320</u>	<u>\$329</u>	<u>\$337</u>	<u>\$345</u>
14 <u>School-Age</u>	<u>\$280</u>	<u>\$287</u>	<u>\$295</u>	<u>\$303</u>	<u>\$310</u>

15 (b) By June 30, 2027, and triennially thereafter, the department of human services in
 16 consultation with the department of labor and training shall conduct an independent survey or
 17 certify an independent survey of the then-current weekly market rates for childcare in Rhode Island
 18 and shall post the findings from the market rate survey on the department's public website. The
 19 departments of human services and labor and training shall jointly determine the survey criteria
 20 including, but not limited to, rate categories and sub-categories.

21 (c) In order to expand the accessibility and availability of quality childcare, the department
 22 of human services is authorized to establish, by regulation, alternative or incentive rates for quality
 23 enhancements, innovative or specialized childcare, and alternative methodologies of childcare
 24 delivery, including nontraditional delivery systems and collaborations.

25 (d) All childcare providers have the option to be paid every two (2) weeks and have the
 26 option of automatic direct deposit and/or electronic funds transfer of payments.

27 SECTION 3. Section 40-5.2-20 of the General Laws in Chapter 40-5.2 entitled "The Rhode
 28 Island Works Program" is hereby repealed.

29 ~~**40-5.2-20. Childcare assistance—Families or assistance units eligible.**~~

30 ~~(a) The department shall provide appropriate child care to every participant who is eligible~~
 31 ~~for cash assistance and who requires child care in order to meet the work requirements in~~
 32 ~~accordance with this chapter.~~

33 ~~(b) Low-income child care. The department shall provide child care to all other working~~
 34 ~~families with incomes at or below two hundred sixty one percent (261%) of the federal poverty~~

1 ~~level if, and to the extent, these other families require child care in order to work at paid~~
2 ~~employment as defined in the department's rules and regulations. The department shall also provide~~
3 ~~child care to families with incomes below two hundred sixty one percent (261%) of the federal~~
4 ~~poverty level if, and to the extent, these families require child care to participate on a short-term~~
5 ~~basis, as defined in the department's rules and regulations, in training, apprenticeship, internship,~~
6 ~~on the job training, work experience, work immersion, or other job readiness/job attachment~~
7 ~~program sponsored or funded by the human resource investment council (governor's workforce~~
8 ~~board) or state agencies that are part of the coordinated program system pursuant to § 42-102-11.~~
9 ~~Effective from January 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, the department shall also provide childcare~~
10 ~~assistance to families with incomes below one hundred eighty percent (180%) of the federal poverty~~
11 ~~level when such assistance is necessary for a member of these families to enroll or maintain~~
12 ~~enrollment in a Rhode Island public institution of higher education provided that eligibility to~~
13 ~~receive funding is capped when expenditures reach \$200,000 for this provision. Effective July 1,~~
14 ~~2022 through December 31, 2024, the department shall also provide childcare assistance to families~~
15 ~~with incomes below two hundred percent (200%) of the federal poverty level when such assistance~~
16 ~~is necessary for a member of these families to enroll or maintain enrollment in a Rhode Island~~
17 ~~public institution of higher education. Effective January 1, 2025, the department shall also provide~~
18 ~~childcare assistance to families with incomes below two hundred sixty one percent (261%) of the~~
19 ~~federal poverty level when such assistance is necessary for a member of these families to enroll or~~
20 ~~maintain enrollment in a Rhode Island public institution of higher education.~~

21 ~~(c) No family/assistance unit shall be eligible for childcare assistance under this chapter if~~
22 ~~the combined value of its liquid resources exceeds one million dollars (\$1,000,000), which~~
23 ~~corresponds to the amount permitted by the federal government under the state plan and set forth~~
24 ~~in the administrative rulemaking process by the department. Liquid resources are defined as any~~
25 ~~interest(s) in property in the form of cash or other financial instruments or accounts that are readily~~
26 ~~convertible to cash or cash equivalents. These include, but are not limited to: cash, bank, credit~~
27 ~~union, or other financial institution savings, checking, and money market accounts; certificates of~~
28 ~~deposit or other time deposits; stocks; bonds; mutual funds; and other similar financial instruments~~
29 ~~or accounts. These do not include educational savings accounts, plans, or programs; retirement~~
30 ~~accounts, plans, or programs; or accounts held jointly with another adult, not including a spouse.~~
31 ~~The department is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to determine the ownership and~~
32 ~~source of the funds in the joint account.~~

33 ~~(d) As a condition of eligibility for childcare assistance under this chapter, the parent or~~
34 ~~caretaker relative of the family must consent to, and must cooperate with, the department in~~

1 ~~establishing paternity, and in establishing and/or enforcing child support and medical support~~
2 ~~orders for any children in the family receiving appropriate child care under this section in~~
3 ~~accordance with the applicable sections of title 15, as amended, unless the parent or caretaker~~
4 ~~relative is found to have good cause for refusing to comply with the requirements of this subsection.~~

5 ~~(e) For purposes of this section, “appropriate child care” means child care, including infant,~~
6 ~~toddler, preschool, nursery school, and school age, that is provided by a person or organization~~
7 ~~qualified, approved, and authorized to provide the care by the state agency or agencies designated~~
8 ~~to make the determinations in accordance with the provisions set forth herein.~~

9 ~~(f)(1) Families with incomes below one hundred percent (100%) of the applicable federal~~
10 ~~poverty level guidelines shall be provided with free child care. Families with incomes greater than~~
11 ~~one hundred percent (100%) and less than two hundred percent (200%) of the applicable federal~~
12 ~~poverty guideline shall be required to pay for some portion of the child care they receive, according~~
13 ~~to a sliding fee scale adopted by the department in the department’s rules, not to exceed seven~~
14 ~~percent (7%) of income as defined in subsection (h) of this section.~~

15 ~~(2) Families who are receiving childcare assistance and who become ineligible for~~
16 ~~childcare assistance as a result of their incomes exceeding two hundred sixty one percent (261%)~~
17 ~~of the applicable federal poverty guidelines shall continue to be eligible for childcare assistance~~
18 ~~until their incomes exceed three hundred percent (300%) of the applicable federal poverty~~
19 ~~guidelines. To be eligible, the families must continue to pay for some portion of the child care they~~
20 ~~receive, as indicated in a sliding fee scale adopted in the department’s rules, not to exceed seven~~
21 ~~percent (7%) of income as defined in subsection (h) of this section, and in accordance with all other~~
22 ~~eligibility standards.~~

23 ~~(g) In determining the type of child care to be provided to a family, the department shall~~
24 ~~take into account the cost of available childcare options; the suitability of the type of care available~~
25 ~~for the child; and the parent’s preference as to the type of child care.~~

26 ~~(h) For purposes of this section, “income” for families receiving cash assistance under §~~
27 ~~40-5.2-11 means gross, earned income and unearned income, subject to the income exclusions in~~
28 ~~§§ 40-5.2-10(g)(2) and 40-5.2-10(g)(3), and income for other families shall mean gross, earned and~~
29 ~~unearned income as determined by departmental regulations.~~

30 ~~(i) The caseload estimating conference established by chapter 17 of title 35 shall forecast~~
31 ~~the expenditures for child care in accordance with the provisions of § 35-17-1.~~

32 ~~(j) In determining eligibility for childcare assistance for children of members of reserve~~
33 ~~components called to active duty during a time of conflict, the department shall freeze the family~~
34 ~~composition and the family income of the reserve component member as it was in the month prior~~

1 ~~to the month of leaving for active duty. This shall continue until the individual is officially~~
2 ~~discharged from active duty.~~

3 ~~(k) Effective from August 1, 2023, through July 31, 2028, the department shall provide~~
4 ~~funding for child care for eligible childcare educators, and childcare staff, who work at least twenty~~
5 ~~(20) hours a week in licensed childcare centers and licensed family childcare homes as defined in~~
6 ~~the department's rules and regulations. Eligibility is limited to qualifying childcare educators and~~
7 ~~childcare staff with family incomes up to three hundred percent (300%) of the applicable federal~~
8 ~~poverty guidelines and will have no copayments. Qualifying participants may select the childcare~~
9 ~~center or family childcare home for their children. The department shall promulgate regulations~~
10 ~~necessary to implement this section, and will collect applicant and participant data to report~~
11 ~~estimated demand for state funded child care for eligible childcare educators and childcare staff.~~
12 ~~The report shall be due annually to the governor and the general assembly by November 1.~~

13 SECTION 4. Section 40-6.2-1.1 of the General Laws in Chapter 40-6.2 entitled "Child
14 Care — State Subsidies" is hereby repealed.

15 ~~**40-6.2-1.1. Rates established.**~~

16 ~~(a) Through June 30, 2015, subject to the payment limitations in subsection (c), the~~
17 ~~maximum reimbursement rates to be paid by the departments of human services and children, youth~~
18 ~~and families for licensed childcare centers and licensed family childcare providers shall be based~~
19 ~~on the following schedule of the 75th percentile of the 2002 weekly market rates adjusted for the~~
20 ~~average of the 75th percentile of the 2002 and the 2004 weekly market rates:~~

21	Licensed Childcare Centers	75th Percentile of Weekly Market Rate
22	Infant	\$182.00
23	Preschool	\$150.00
24	School Age	\$135.00
25	Licensed Family Childcare Providers	75th Percentile of Weekly Market Rate
26	Infant	\$150.00
27	Preschool	\$150.00
28	School Age	\$135.00

29 ~~Effective July 1, 2015, subject to the payment limitations in subsection (c), the maximum~~
30 ~~reimbursement rates to be paid by the departments of human services and children, youth and~~
31 ~~families for licensed childcare centers and licensed family childcare providers shall be based on the~~
32 ~~above schedule of the 75th percentile of the 2002 weekly market rates adjusted for the average of~~
33 ~~the 75th percentile of the 2002 and the 2004 weekly market rates. These rates shall be increased by~~
34 ~~ten dollars (\$10.00) per week for infant/toddler care provided by licensed family childcare~~

1 ~~providers and license-exempt providers and then the rates for all providers for all age groups shall~~
2 ~~be increased by three percent (3%). For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018, licensed childcare~~
3 ~~centers shall be reimbursed a maximum weekly rate of one hundred ninety-three dollars and sixty-~~
4 ~~four cents (\$193.64) for infant/toddler care and one hundred sixty-one dollars and seventy-one~~
5 ~~cents (\$161.71) for preschool-age children.~~

6 ~~(b) Effective July 1, 2018, subject to the payment limitations in subsection (c), the~~
7 ~~maximum infant/toddler and preschool-age reimbursement rates to be paid by the departments of~~
8 ~~human services and children, youth and families for licensed childcare centers shall be~~
9 ~~implemented in a tiered manner, reflective of the quality rating the provider has achieved within~~
10 ~~the state's quality rating system outlined in § 42-12-23.1.~~

11 ~~(1) For infant/toddler child care, tier one shall be reimbursed two and one-half percent~~
12 ~~(2.5%) above the FY 2018 weekly amount, tier two shall be reimbursed five percent (5%) above~~
13 ~~the FY 2018 weekly amount, tier three shall be reimbursed thirteen percent (13%) above the FY~~
14 ~~2018 weekly amount, tier four shall be reimbursed twenty percent (20%) above the FY 2018 weekly~~
15 ~~amount, and tier five shall be reimbursed thirty-three percent (33%) above the FY 2018 weekly~~
16 ~~amount.~~

17 ~~(2) For preschool reimbursement rates, tier one shall be reimbursed two and one-half~~
18 ~~percent (2.5%) above the FY 2018 weekly amount, tier two shall be reimbursed five percent (5%)~~
19 ~~above the FY 2018 weekly amount, tier three shall be reimbursed ten percent (10%) above the FY~~
20 ~~2018 weekly amount, tier four shall be reimbursed thirteen percent (13%) above the FY 2018~~
21 ~~weekly amount, and tier five shall be reimbursed twenty-one percent (21%) above the FY 2018~~
22 ~~weekly amount.~~

23 ~~(c) [Deleted by P.L. 2019, ch. 88, art. 13, § 4.]~~

24 ~~(d) By June 30, 2004, and biennially through June 30, 2014, the department of labor and~~
25 ~~training shall conduct an independent survey or certify an independent survey of the then-current~~
26 ~~weekly market rates for child care in Rhode Island and shall forward the weekly market rate survey~~
27 ~~to the department of human services. The next survey shall be conducted by June 30, 2016, and~~
28 ~~triennially thereafter. The departments of human services and labor and training will jointly~~
29 ~~determine the survey criteria including, but not limited to, rate categories and sub-categories.~~

30 ~~(e) In order to expand the accessibility and availability of quality child care, the department~~
31 ~~of human services is authorized to establish, by regulation, alternative or incentive rates of~~
32 ~~reimbursement for quality enhancements, innovative or specialized child care, and alternative~~
33 ~~methodologies of childcare delivery, including nontraditional delivery systems and collaborations.~~

34 ~~(f) Effective January 1, 2007, all childcare providers have the option to be paid every two~~

~~(2) weeks and have the option of automatic direct deposit and/or electronic funds transfer of reimbursement payments.~~

~~(g) Effective July 1, 2019, the maximum infant/toddler reimbursement rates to be paid by the departments of human services and children, youth and families for licensed family childcare providers shall be implemented in a tiered manner, reflective of the quality rating the provider has achieved within the state's quality rating system outlined in § 42-12-23.1. Tier one shall be reimbursed two percent (2%) above the prevailing base rate for step 1 and step 2 providers, three percent (3%) above prevailing base rate for step 3 providers, and four percent (4%) above the prevailing base rate for step 4 providers; tier two shall be reimbursed five percent (5%) above the prevailing base rate; tier three shall be reimbursed eleven percent (11%) above the prevailing base rate; tier four shall be reimbursed fourteen percent (14%) above the prevailing base rate; and tier five shall be reimbursed twenty three percent (23%) above the prevailing base rate.~~

~~(h) Through December 31, 2021, the maximum reimbursement rates paid by the departments of human services, and children, youth and families to licensed childcare centers shall be consistent with the enhanced emergency rates provided as of June 1, 2021, as follows:~~

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5
Infant/Toddler	\$257.54	\$257.54	\$257.54	\$257.54	\$273.00
Preschool Age	\$195.67	\$195.67	\$195.67	\$195.67	\$260.00
School Age	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$245.00

~~The maximum reimbursement rates paid by the departments of human services, and children, youth and families to licensed family childcare providers shall be consistent with the enhanced emergency rates provided as of June 1, 2021, as follows:~~

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5
Infant/Toddler	\$224.43	\$224.43	\$224.43	\$224.43	\$224.43
Preschool Age	\$171.45	\$171.45	\$171.45	\$171.45	\$171.45
School Age	\$162.30	\$162.30	\$162.30	\$162.30	\$162.30

~~(i) Effective January 1, 2022, the maximum reimbursement rates to be paid by the departments of human services and children, youth and families for licensed childcare centers shall be implemented in a tiered manner, reflective of the quality rating the provider has achieved within the state's quality rating system outlined in § 42-12-23.1. Maximum weekly rates shall be reimbursed as follows:~~

~~Licensed Childcare Centers~~

	Tier One	Tier Two	Tier Three	Tier Four	Tier Five
Infant/Toddler	\$236.36	\$244.88	\$257.15	\$268.74	\$284.39

1 ~~Preschool \$207.51 \$212.27 \$218.45 \$223.50 \$231.39~~

2 ~~School Age \$180.38 \$182.77 \$185.17 \$187.57 \$189.97~~

3 ~~The maximum reimbursement rates for licensed family childcare providers paid by the~~
4 ~~departments of human services, and children, youth and families is determined through collective~~
5 ~~bargaining. The maximum reimbursement rates for infant/toddler and preschool age children paid~~
6 ~~to licensed family childcare providers by both departments is implemented in a tiered manner that~~
7 ~~reflects the quality rating the provider has achieved in accordance with § 42-12-23.1.~~

8 ~~(j) Effective July 1, 2022, the maximum reimbursement rates to be paid by the departments~~
9 ~~of human services and children, youth and families for licensed childcare centers shall be~~
10 ~~implemented in a tiered manner, reflective of the quality rating the provider has achieved within~~
11 ~~the state's quality rating system outlined in § 42-12-23.1. Maximum weekly rates shall be~~
12 ~~reimbursed as follows:~~

13 ~~Licensed Childcare Centers~~

	Tier One	Tier Two	Tier Three	Tier Four	Tier Five
Infant/Toddler	\$265	\$270	\$282	\$289	\$300
Preschool	\$225	\$235	\$243	\$250	\$260
School Age	\$200	\$205	\$220	\$238	\$250

18 ~~(k) Effective July 1, 2024, the maximum reimbursement rates to be paid by the departments~~
19 ~~of human services and children, youth and families for licensed childcare centers shall be~~
20 ~~implemented in a tiered manner, reflective of the quality rating the provider has achieved within~~
21 ~~the state's quality rating system outlined in § 42-12-23.1. Maximum weekly rates shall be~~
22 ~~reimbursed as follows:~~

23 ~~Licensed Childcare Centers~~

24 ~~(l) Effective July 1, 2025, the maximum reimbursement rates to be paid by the departments~~
25 ~~of human services and children, youth and families for licensed childcare centers shall be~~
26 ~~implemented in a tiered manner, reflective of the quality rating the provider has achieved within~~
27 ~~the state's quality rating system outlined in § 42-12-23.1. Maximum weekly rates shall be~~
28 ~~reimbursed as follows:~~

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5
Infant	\$334	\$341	\$355	\$364	\$378
Toddlers	\$278	\$284	\$296	\$303	\$315
Preschoolers	\$236	\$247	\$255	\$263	\$273
School Age	\$210	\$215	\$231	\$250	\$263

1 SECTION 5. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

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LC004412
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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- RHODE ISLAND CHILDCARE IS ESSENTIAL ACT

1 This act would update and consolidate two sections of the Rhode Island Works statute that
2 govern the Rhode Island Childcare Assistance Program, the state’s childcare subsidy program, into
3 a new statute to be known as the Child Care is Essential Act. The act would expand eligibility for
4 the program to meet the federal eligibility benchmark so that families with incomes at or below
5 eighty-five percent (85%) of the state median income would be eligible. The act would allow
6 families to continue eligibility until their income exceeds one hundred percent (100%) of the state
7 median income. The act would also increase the tiered rates of paid for licensed childcare centers
8 to meet or exceed the federal equal access benchmark for all age groups and with rates for infants
9 under age eighteen (18) months 30% higher than the rates for toddlers.

10 This act would take effect on July 1, 2026.

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