WHEREAS, On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, requiring rapid, necessary public health risk mitigation efforts around the world, including Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in disruptions to workplaces, schools and child care facilities throughout the State; and

WHEREAS, In the two years since that declaration, Rhode Island’s early childhood sector has experienced widespread instability, in part due to mandated facility closures, decreasing enrollment throughout the pandemic, workforce shortages, and financial strain; and

WHEREAS, Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, child care providers in Rhode Island’s child care assistance program faced historically low reimbursement rates for their services, particularly for infant and toddler care, that fell well below the federal equal access standard, a national benchmark set to ensure all families have access to high-quality child care; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island families rely on the child care system in order to work, and to ensure their children can develop, thrive and enter school ready to keep learning; and

WHEREAS, Child care is often the biggest household expense incurred by families; according to Rhode Island Kids Count’s most recent fact book, a Rhode Island family would need to earn at least $155,757 annually to afford the average yearly cost for a three-year-old placed in a licensed child care center; and
WHEREAS, During the COVID-19 pandemic, the state used its administrative authority
to implement policies that would ensure child care providers could keep their doors open, and
parents could continue to afford care, all while implementing CDC guidance for keeping children,
workers, and families healthy; and

WHEREAS, One of those important policies was waiving family copayments in the child
care assistance program, while temporarily increasing reimbursement rates to providers to
simultaneously make child care more affordable for families and minimize the financial burden
placed on providers; and

WHEREAS, In February of 2022, the Department of Human Services notified child care
providers that beginning March 6, 2022, family copayments would be reinstated and providers
would be expected to collect weekly copayments directly from families; and

WHEREAS, Reinstating family copayments presents an immediate, unreasonable, and
unnecessary financial burden to families, particularly since children under the age of five are not
eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine and the CDC still recommends strict isolation and quarantine
guidance for child care facilities, leaving families with the likelihood that essential child care
services will not be consistently available in the event of additional COVID-19 cases and
exposure; and

WHEREAS, The financial burden put on families increases the risk that parents will be
forced to leave the workforce to care for children because they can no longer afford child care,
which will put further strain on Rhode Island businesses and the state’s economic recovery; and

WHEREAS, Reinstating family copayments also presents an immediate risk to child care
providers, who cannot absorb the cost of unpaid copayments or withstand further enrollment
declines; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
respectfully requests that the Rhode Island Department of Human Services use its regulatory
authority to immediately reduce family copayments for the Child Care Assistance Program to the
lowest sliding-scale rates legally allowable under federal and state law, and that those reduced
rates remain in place through June 30, 2022; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to His Excellency Governor Dan McKee, and to
Womazetta Jones, Secretary of the Executive of Office Health and Human Services, and to
Yvette Mendes, Interim Director of the Department of Human Services.

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