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11th Annual Luncheon Celebrates Success of Rlte Care and Rlte Smiles

Governor Chafee, Senator Reed, Senator Whitehouse, Congressman Cicilline, Senate President Paiva Weed, Majority Leader Mattiello and other elected officials and community leaders will attend Celebration of Children's Health

RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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Providence, R.I. (November 14, 2011) – More than 150 community leaders, elected officials, and health care experts will gather for the eleventh annual *Celebration of Children's Health* this afternoon. The luncheon brings leaders together to celebrate the progress that Rhode Island has made in achieving positive health outcomes for children each year. This year the event will highlight the importance and success of Rlte Care (Rhode Island's health insurance program for children and families) and Rlte Smiles (Rhode Island's dental benefit program for children under age 11, which is celebrating its fifth year).

Governor Lincoln Chafee and First Lady Stephanie Chafee will be in attendance at today's event. *Covering Kids* awards will be presented to elected officials and community partners for their contributions to increasing access to health insurance coverage for children, including Governor Lincoln Chafee, U.S. Senator Jack Reed, U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, U.S. Representative David Cicilline, Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts, Senate President Teresa Paiva Weed and House Majority Leader Nicholas Mattiello. Several members of the community will be receiving awards as well, including Dr. Daniel Kane, Dental Director at Saint Joseph Hospital Pediatric Dental Center/CharterCARE, Dr. Carol Lewis, Pediatrician at Hasbro Children's Hospital, and JoAnn Roberts, School Nurse Teacher for Westerly Public Schools.

According to recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the percentage of children with employer-sponsored health coverage dropped from 67.1% in 2005-2007 to 60.8% in 2008-2010. Despite this decrease, children's health insurance coverage rates held steady, with 6.3% of Rhode Island's children uninsured in the three-year period from 2008 to 2010, the same percentage as in the period from

2005 to 2007. This consistency is attributed in part to Rhode Island's Rlte Care program, which offers an affordable high-quality health coverage option for children and families who do not have access to health insurance any other way.

"Rlte Care continues to be a national model for providing children and families health insurance coverage efficiently and cost-effectively," stated Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. "As families struggle with job loss or can no longer afford the coverage offered by employers facing steep increases in premiums, Rlte Care helps ensure that our state's children can access the high-quality health care they need to stay healthy."

At today's Celebration of Children's Health, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will release a report – *Rlte Care Results* – which details the many successes of the Rlte Care program, including:

- **Children and adults with Rlte Care coverage have the lowest percentage of emergency admissions to the hospital.** One in three admissions to the hospital for Rlte Care members are emergencies, fewer than two in five emergency admissions for the privately insured and eight in ten for the uninsured.
- **Children with Rlte Care have fewer preventable hospitalizations than uninsured children.** Preventable hospitalizations for children with Rlte Care decreased from 12% in 2001 to 11% in 2009, while the percent of preventable hospitalizations for uninsured children more than doubled (from 7% in 2001 to 17% in 2009).
- **Fewer women with Rlte Care coverage smoke during pregnancy,** which can increase the likelihood of poor birth outcomes. The percentage of women enrolled in Rlte Care who smoked during pregnancy decreased from 32% in 1993 to 16% in 2009.
- **The number of women enrolled in Rlte Care who have short interval births (less than 18 months between one child and the next) is declining.** In 2009, 29% of women enrolled in Rlte Care had short interval births, down from 41% in 1993.
- **The number of babies dying in the first year of life is declining among publically-insured infants.** The infant mortality rate dropped from 9.8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 1993 to 6.0 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2009.

At today's luncheon, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will release a second report – *Rlte Smiles Results*. Rlte Smiles, Rhode Island's managed oral health program for children with Medicaid coverage, is designed to increase access to dental services, promote development of good oral health behaviors, decrease the need for restorative and emergency dental care and decrease Medicaid expenditures for oral health care. According to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Rhode Island recently ranked sixth best in the U.S. for access to dental care for children with Medicaid coverage. Other Rlte Smiles successes include:

- **Access to oral health care has improved for young children.** Thirteen percent of children ages two years and younger with Medicaid coverage received dental services in 2010, compared to 2% in 2002 – a significant improvement and the first time that more than 10% received dental care. About 70% of children ages nine and ten with Medicaid coverage received at least one dental service in 2009 and 2010.
- **The number of dentists participating in Rlte Smiles has expanded.** As of July 2011, there were 202 dentists in 380 locations in Rhode Island and Massachusetts participating in Rlte Smiles, up from 27 before Rlte Smiles began, and 90 at the launch of the program.
- **The number of preventive services has increased in recent years.** Between 2002 and 2010, there was an 84% increase in the percentage of children ages 6 to 9 who had at least one dental sealant, increasing from 1,905 children in 2002 to 3,504 children in 2010.

“The successes we are seeing with the Rlte Care and Rlte Smiles programs are proof that the strategies Rhode Island has implemented for improving children's health are working,” added Bryant. “We need to continue to work to preserve and protect these vital programs for children in our state.”

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.