



**RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT**  
ONE UNION STATION  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903  
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE. Contact: Katherine Linwood Chu, Communications Coordinator  
401.351.9400, Ext. 22 / [kchu@rikidscount.org](mailto:kchu@rikidscount.org)

## ***The Raising of America: Are We Crazy About Our Kids? A Rhode Island Conversation***

*Documentary screening and community discussion focused on investing in  
high-quality early care and education*

*'The Raising of America' is the first national public engagement project that aims to  
reframe the way Americans look at early child health and development*

Providence, RI – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, in partnership with the Economic Progress Institute, Ready to Learn Providence, and the RI Association for Infant Mental Health, will host ***'The Raising of America: Are We Crazy About Our Kids?': A Rhode Island Conversation***. The documentary screening and community discussion will be at the Cable Car Cinema (204 South Main Street, Providence, RI) from 4:30 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. on Thursday, December 3, 2015.

Featured speakers will include Rhode Island Department of Education Commissioner Ken Wagner, Rhode Island Department of Health Director Nicole Alexander-Scott, Rhode Island Department of Human Services Director Melba Depeña, and Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Executive Director Elizabeth Burke Bryant.

### **The Early Years Matter**

Research shows that children's earliest experiences shape the developing brain, laying the foundation for future learning and life-long physical and emotional health. Exposure to nurturing or adverse interactions and enriching or impoverished environments in the early years affects how we think, feel, and relate to others as we age, the development of our skills and knowledge, and our capacities for empathy, impulse control, and emotional connections.

### **'The Raising of America': A National Call to Action**

'The Raising of America' is the first national, fully integrated media/public engagement project that aims to reframe the way Americans look at early child health and development. It is a five-part documentary series that explores the question: Why are so many children in America faring so poorly? What are the consequences for the nation's future? How might we, as a nation, do better?

At the *Rhode Island Conversation*, episode three of the five-part documentary series will be screened. *Are We Crazy About Our Kids?* brings to life the seminal studies of Perry Preschool, Abecedarian and other initiatives conducted by Nobel Laureate James Heckman, former Federal Reserve economist Arthur Rolnick and others demonstrating how high-quality early care and preschool yield significant personal and social benefits—and pay for themselves many times over.

### **Rhode Island: Focusing on High-Quality Early Education**

[According to a recent report](#) from the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, Rhode Island is making progress toward building and enhancing high-quality early-learning programs. Through the federal Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant, Rhode Island is increasing the number of children, including children with high needs, enrolled in high-quality early learning programs.

“Rhode Island has made great progress through the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge and through its success in winning federal grants for State Pre-K expansion and evidence-based family home visiting,” said Bryant. “We are excited to host this event, to discuss how Rhode Island can build on this momentum and continue to invest in young children’s learning and development. Supporting young children’s learning and healthy development is absolutely critical for the well-being of our children, families, and future economy. The fact that we will have agency directors, statewide leaders, representatives from school districts, and community leaders in the room speaks to the fact that Rhode Island is serious about working together and focusing resources to improve outcomes for young children.”

###

*[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.*