



**RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT**

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## Testimony Re: House Bill 5751 Regarding Education Aid

House Finance Committee

June 7, 2017

Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its strong support for House Bill 5751 which would make permanent the categorical fund for English Learners (ELs) that was created in FY 2017.

Before FY 2017, Rhode Island was one of only four states (others were Delaware, Mississippi, and Montana) with an education funding formula that did not include designated EL funding.

Recent reports, including a 2013 report by the Latino Policy Institute, have noted that Rhode Island's EL students are among the lowest performing students in the nation as measured by the *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*, also known as the Nation's Report Card.

In 2016, 13% of third-grade EL students met or exceeded expectations on the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* English language arts assessment, compared to 43% of non-EL students. In 2016, only 1% of seventh-grade EL students met or exceeded expectations on the *PARCC* math assessment, compared to 30% of non-EL students. The overall four-year graduation rate for Rhode Island students entering the ninth grade during the 2012-2013 school year and graduating in 2016 was 85%, but only 77% for ELs.

For these reasons, we have strongly supported the Funding Formula Working Group's recommendations that Rhode Island:

- (1) Provide additional financial support for English Learners
- (2) Calculate funding to support ELs based on the number of ELs in a district
- (3) Include reasonable restrictions to ensure that funding is used to benefit ELs

Both this bill and Article 18 of the Governor's budget propose a permanent categorical fund equal to 10% of the core instructional amount be created and distributed to districts based on the number of ELs they serve and used exclusively to provide "high-quality, research-based services" to EL students. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT strongly supports this funding strategy because it would ensure that districts with high proportions of EL students receive the additional resources they need and that the funds are targeted to address EL students' needs.

Thank you for your commitment to a predictable and equitable funding formula and for the opportunity to comment today.