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Testimony Re: H-7713 Relating to State Affairs and Government, Child Care Licensing

House Health, Education & Welfare Committee

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its **support for House 7713**. This bill would establish a process for issuing intermediate sanctions for child care licensing violations in order to improve enforcement of critical health and safety regulations.

Child care is an essential need for working families and it is the foundation of our early learning system. Approximately 72% of Rhode Island children age 5 and younger and 77% of school-age children have all parents in the workforce.

Child care needs to be high-quality to promote children's development and learning. Across the U.S. and in Rhode Island, child care varies markedly in quality, with some programs providing enriching learning experiences and other programs providing mediocre, custodial care.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports both Budget Article 15 and H-7713 to establish intermediate sanctions to enforce critical health and safety regulations in child care licensing. Licensing provides the foundation of quality by focusing on critical health and safety practices. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT has been recommending the state adopt intermediate sanctions to improve child care licensing since 2008 when the National Association of Regulatory Administration (the national organization for state child care licensing administrators) reviewed our licensing practices and recommended the state use fines to improve licensing compliance.

We also recommend the state move forward to post licensing inspection reports for child care programs on a website accessible to the public. This is now required under federal law and is a proven strategy to improve licensing compliance.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We urge support for this important piece of legislation.