



**RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT**

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**Testimony Re: House Bill 5063 Regarding Creating a Special  
Legislative Commission to Study the Impact of the Trauma Inflicted on  
Children Who Are Exposed to Violence**

**House Health, Education & Welfare Committee**

**January 30, 2019**

**Kara Foley, Policy Analyst**

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 support for House Bill 5063. This bill would establish a special legislative commission to study the impact of trauma inflicted on children who are exposed to violence.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT tracks over 70 indicators across child well-being in our annual Factbook publication and consistently reports the latest available data on Children Witnessing Domestic Violence and Youth Violence. Youth can experience violence as victims, witnesses, or offenders and that can cause emotional harm, physical injury, or death.

An estimated 10 million U.S. children are exposed to domestic violence each year. Rates of partner violence are higher among couples with children than those without children. In Rhode Island in 2015 (the most recent year for which full data are available), police reports indicate that children were present at 28% of domestic violence incidents resulting in arrests. Children who are exposed to domestic violence are also more likely to be victims of child abuse and neglect than those who are not and can experience violence in the community which can further compound trauma.

Exposure to violence is distressing to children and can lead to mental health problems, including posttraumatic stress, depression, and anxiety, in childhood and later in life. Children who witness domestic violence are more likely to experience physical, emotional, health, and learning challenges throughout their childhood and adulthood. While many children who have witnessed domestic violence show resilience, exposure to violence may impair a child's capacity for partnering and parenting later in life. There is a strong association between witnessing domestic violence as a child and becoming a perpetrator of domestic violence as an adult.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.