



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

Testimony Re: House Bill 5047 Relating to Education – Establishing a Class Size Maximum for Kindergarten through Grade 2

House Finance Committee

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Paige Clausius-Parks, Senior Policy Analyst

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for House Bill 5047 to set a maximum class size of 20 for children in kindergarten through grade 2.

Small class size in the early grades has been identified as an effective strategy for raising achievement levels, particularly for low-income and minority students. Small class sizes enable teachers to use a variety of strategies to promote learning in the early grades, including more individualized attention, small group instruction, and re-teaching of concepts using alternate methods.

Currently, only 40% of third graders in Rhode Island are meeting expectations for reading. Reading proficiency in third grade is a key predictor of school success and high school graduation. Research shows that children who are not proficient readers by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers. Rhode Island is working to double the number of children who can read proficiently by 2025.

Improving reading instruction during the early grades is essential for addressing this challenge. Reducing class size can be an important strategy to improve reading instruction.

The Education Commission of the States lists **at least 27 states with laws** that establish maximum class sizes or provide funding to incentivize smaller class sizes, particularly in kindergarten and the early elementary grades.

The Rhode Island Department of Education has established maximum class size of 18 (with a teacher and a teaching assistant) for State Pre-K (although this may be adjusted to a maximum class size of 20) and 24 (with a teacher and a teaching assistant) for state approved kindergarten classrooms.

Thank you for considering legislation to establish a class size reduction strategy for K through Grade 2. Meeting the state's goals of doubling reading 3rd grade reading proficiency will take bold action.

rikids@rikidscount.org
www.rikidscount.org